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Official Records

2nd plenary meeting
Monday, 27 September 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Adada (Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Carlos Veiga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. Veiga (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Through you, Sir, we wish to thank the General Assembly for its timely decision to devote this special plenary session to those of its members that are small island developing States. By so doing, the United Nations reaffirms not only that all its Members, large or small, advantaged or disadvantaged, have a voice and a vote in its deliberations, but also that all of them, in accordance with their respective needs, deserve the attention and solidarity of their international partners.

The special nature of the constraints affecting the development of small island States was recognized in the Rio Declaration that was the culmination of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. And rightly so, since small island States, regardless of their location, do indeed have special environmental characteristics and problems.

Two years later, in 1994, the Declaration and Programme of Action resulting from the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados, gave us a comprehensive, integrated set of recommendations that provide a genuine blueprint for the efforts of our States and of the international community in general to promote the development of small island States.

It should be recognized that these States have assumed their commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action with seriousness and a sense of ownership, and even under difficult conditions have made considerable efforts to implement it. This is a necessary condition for the progress and survival of our States. But, in addition, scattered over five oceans and seas, we recognize that we are the custodians of large areas of the world's oceans, that are important to humankind and have a large share of global biodiversity. Moreover, it is the islands that are most vulnerable to the global threat of uncontrolled climate change.

All of these factors provide powerful arguments and strong motivation for a genuine, rich and diversified partnership between our countries and the international community of which we are members. Furthermore, with respect to the environment, perhaps more directly than in many other areas, the world reacts as the single entity that it is. The small island developing States' acute

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awareness of the consequences of this fact has led them to participate actively in the search for solutions and commitments within the various international forums in order to address more effectively the common problems and challenges facing humankind.

The number of small island States at the United Nations, meanwhile, has increased with the recent addition of the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as Members — a happy development for their category of States. We welcome dearly these three countries.

At the same time, we wish to convey our appreciation to the Government of Samoa, which currently occupies the chairmanship of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), and to the other countries that, under that Government's coordination, have worked with wisdom, competence and devotion to demonstrate our informal group's usefulness to the international community, their scarce resources notwithstanding.

Five years after the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and following a preparatory process whose quality and spirit of cooperation we wish to emphasize, this special session of the General Assembly will adopt two important documents: a declaration and a document on the state of progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. These documents renew our political will, update its expression, analyse past achievements, place the situation in perspective and clarify in the medium term the balance between that which is desirable and that which seems achievable through our endeavours.

We believe that this exercise will help our small States increase and improve the effectiveness of their own efforts, and that it will encourage their international partners to place a higher value on our cooperation for mutual benefit. This is a necessity. Nothing can be gained by ignoring the fact that resources allocated to international cooperation with the small island States in many areas, including those of finance, technology and trade, have been insufficient. Thus, the Commission on Sustainable Development has provided eloquent statistics that demonstrate that between 1994, when the Barbados Programme of Action was adopted, and 1997, net transfers to our countries; rather than rising, fell by 17 per cent. This has had obvious consequences for our capacity to implement strategies for sustainable development.

In this context, the so-called targeted implementation of the Programme of Action becomes something of a euphemism, since, at least in part, the selection is dictated by the lack of resources to carry out the necessary programmes.

Nevertheless, we do not question the priorities established, which currently include the areas of climate change, natural disasters, water resources, marine and coastal resources, energy and tourism. These are indeed critical areas in which the small island States face major constraints, and they would benefit greatly from overcoming them.

In one of these areas — water resources — my country faces a very serious long-standing problem. Drought, once cyclic in Cape Verde, has been a permanent condition there for the past 20 years. The deep-rooted tenacity of the Cape Verdean people is the source of their capacity to respond and adapt to the adverse conditions of their environment.

However, persistent drought has placed a continuous drain on a significant portion of the country's scarce resources, which are needed to finance the costly expansion of desalination programmes for sea water and ground water and the annual renewal of public works programmes in the agricultural areas most severely affected by this scourge.

In apparent contradiction of the special constraints that the small island developing States face, several of them display relatively acceptable human development indicators and even per capita gross national products. This progress has sometimes been used to justify sudden cuts in official development assistance to our countries, which are particularly disastrous at crucial times, such as when we are endeavouring to consolidate and give sustainability to our new development prospects.

This disturbing trend, which penalizes our countries for their efforts, merely confirms the extent to which the socio-economic reality of the small island States, the subtle interrelationship between the factors affecting them and, above all, their enormous vulnerability, remains misunderstood. The tendency to take decisions with drastic implications for small island States on the basis of a cursory glance at certain statistics can be no less than catastrophic for them.

Failure to take seriously the fragility of small island States' socio-economic equilibrium can destroy with a

single blow what long-term relations have laboriously built. The same vulnerability that makes it possible to achieve remarkable results with relatively modest resources in small environments, particularly those of the islands, should lead us to conclude that a reduction in these resources can entail significant harm to vulnerable aspects of their social and human development.

Thus, we welcome the ongoing study by the Committee on Economic Planning into the complex question of small island developing States' socio-economic and environmental vulnerability and sustainability.

In the interim, we urge our international partners to give greater thought to their options in channelling official development assistance to these countries. Ultimately, such assistance is quite small, yet fluctuations in it will have a great impact on our small island societies.

In closing, I wish to express my delegation's hope that this session will provide us with further impetus in our search for ways and means of implementing the Barbados Programme of Action so that the legitimate desire of the people of small island States for sustained and sustainable human development can be fulfilled.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde for his statement.

I now call on Her Excellency The Honourable Mrs. Billie Miller, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Barbados.

Mrs. Miller (Barbados): On 25 April 1994 Barbados welcomed representatives of 111 Governments to Bridgetown for the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Conference was viewed by many as an important test case, with many small islands spearheading the effort to integrate the sustainable development imperative into national and regional policy options.

Like most experiments, the process created expectations among its target group that were not fully shared by the more influential members of the international community. The Declaration of Barbados and the Barbados Programme of Action were bold in their design, but modest in their scope for implementation — largely because of the prevailing differences in perceptions as to funding needs and priorities.

Five years later, this special session has been convened to review the progress made to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. It is a time to document the areas of real progress and to identify priority areas for further action. It is also, I submit, a time to reflect on the dynamic changes that have taken place in the conduct of international economic affairs since April 1994 and to examine their impact on the capacity of small island developing States to achieve their sustainable development objectives. I am convinced that without such an analysis, which would place our further efforts firmly within the context of the current and future global challenges, any follow-up strategies to strengthen the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action will be seriously flawed.

As the Deputy Prime Minister of Barbados, the country whose name is inextricably linked to the small island developing States process, I share in the responsibility to ensure that the commitments entered into by the international community in 1994 are carried to fruition in the most effective manner. I have a clear duty also to insist that the intellectual debate on how to strengthen the sustainable development prospects for a uniquely fragile and vulnerable group of countries is informed by the most current thinking, produced by those who fully understand the complex circumstances of the countries for which they prescribe solutions. These are not matters that can be trivialized simply because the communities whose concerns are being addressed are some of the smallest and most marginalized on the face of the earth. For, as the 1999 United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report* reminds us, if global opportunities are not shared better, the failed growth of the last decades will continue.

We recall that when our efforts began in the early 1990s there was little international recognition of the degree to which the ecological fragility and vulnerability of small island developing States constrained their development options. There was much scepticism, too, at the notion that there was a sufficient commonality among small island developing States to merit their categorization as a separate group of States deserving of special consideration within the United Nations system. Happily, international opinion has been persuaded of the merits of our case, and the acronym SIDS is now a permanent part of the lexicon of the United Nations.

It is important to highlight also the manner in which the small island developing States themselves have gone about the business of implementing those aspects of the

Barbados Programme of Action which fall under national or regional jurisdiction. Most small island developing States have now prepared national environmental strategies and action plans. The follow-up effort has been equally positive.

Across regions, the shared experience of the Global Conference has strengthened the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and created a forum for small island developing States issues. Information is now exchanged across vast distances through the technology of the Small Island Developing States Network. The lobbying power of a group of some 40 small States has had its most visible expression in the campaign for responsible international action to combat the phenomenon of climate change. Other issues critical to the survival of small island developing States lend themselves to similar treatment. In summary, Barbados is proud of the pioneering work that has been done by AOSIS and is confident that its central role as an advocate for the interests of small island developing States and as a focal point for cooperation between small island developing States will be strengthened in the future.

Internationally, while the call to action in support of small island developing States has generated some positive results, the overall response has not been encouraging. Indeed, the small island developing States donors meeting held in February of this year, while generating an enthusiastic response from small island developing States and gaining the attention of donor countries, has thus far failed to produce tangible results or additional project funding.

The Caribbean islands, together with their continental partners of the Caribbean Basin, accord the highest priority to the sustainable management and use of their most important shared economic resource. I speak of the Caribbean Sea. We have recognized that the Caribbean Sea can no longer sustain the immensity of demands placed upon it without a holistic and integrated management approach. For this reason the Caribbean Basin States have proposed to the international community the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. This is a new concept that is still in its infancy and will be the subject of further careful elaboration. It remains our firm contention that the special characteristics of the Caribbean Sea merit an innovative management approach embracing the concerns of all States bordering the Sea, as well as the international community.

Barbados is grateful for the cooperation and partnership shown by the members of AOSIS, the Group of 77 and China and Mexico under the leadership of Canada in the recent efforts to elaborate a draft resolution to take forward this concept. We are confident that we can count on their support when discussions on the matter continue in the Second Committee during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

As we look to the future, the debate on ways to enhance the sustainability of small island developing States must necessarily be informed by one central new factor: the impact of globalization and trade liberalization on the economic prospects of our countries. In April 1994, the Uruguay Round had not yet concluded. The World Trade Organization had not yet come into being. More significantly, the majority of small island developing States — with limited capacity for strategic analysis and negotiation — had failed to grasp the enormity of the process upon which the major trading nations of the world were embarked. It is now clear, in 1999, that with the erosion of trade preferences and the decline in aid flows, the sustainable development imperatives of small island developing States are seriously constrained by the magnitude of the economic adjustments we are now compelled to make. The banana battles of recent vintage have been a cruel reality check for the countries of the Caribbean.

The small island developing States process has done much to expand the concepts of vulnerability articulated earlier by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Much promising work has been done to develop a vulnerability index to balance the distortions created by excessive reliance on gross national product per capita. This could provide an important additional element in considering a country's graduation from concessionary financing if international development institutions could be persuaded to accept it and apply it consistently.

Further attempts to create alternative approaches to lessen the vulnerability of small States during globalization are also being pursued under the auspices of the Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Joint Task Force. For these to succeed, however, they must cease to regurgitate well-worn diagnoses and often inadequate policy responses and move to deal in a bold and innovative way with the profoundly different set of circumstances now facing the world's small States, three fifths of which are islands.

These small and vulnerable economies need longer and more flexible transitional arrangements to allow them

to make the inevitable adjustment to full trade liberalization. They need enlightened responses from the international community and policies that help strengthen their human and institutional capacity to deal with the changes ahead and to take full advantage of the new technologies of the knowledge-based economy. They need support for their attempts to diversify into new areas, such as services, not arbitrary reactions that seek to attribute any perceived competitiveness to practices dubiously described as harmful. Finally, they need protection against the insidious spread of transnational crime in the form of narcotics and arms trafficking and money laundering, to which geography, size and insularity make them especially vulnerable.

Sustainable development for small island developing States in the twenty-first century will require an unambiguous commitment from the international community to develop special measures to assist small island developing States to make an effective transition to globalization and to guard against their further marginalization. We look forward to building that partnership.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency The Honourable Betty Okwir, Cabinet Minister, Office of the Vice-President of Uganda.

Ms. Okwir (Uganda): I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating the President most warmly on his election to preside over our deliberations. We have complete trust and confidence that he will lead us to a fruitful conclusion.

In Barbados in 1994, we recognized the special heritage of mankind that small island developing States represent. We noted with particular fondness the grace, delicate balance and richness of the harmonious coexistence of diverse forms of flora, fauna and humanity that make the islands unique and the apple of the world's eye. Yet at the same time we stated candidly that the islands were increasingly vulnerable and that their precarious situation, if left unattended, would soon mirror similar critical circumstances in Africa, the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries. Today, as we review the Barbados Programme of Action, we would like the small island developing States to be recognized as a category of countries whose vulnerability deserves special attention, and to express our full solidarity with them. It is our hope that such recognition will help in the urgent mobilization of support for the efforts of small islands to develop sustainably.

The sustainable development of small islands, and even their survival, should not be taken for granted. How the islands fare in this fierce world of cut-throat competition and an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor — their very survival in a world in which unsustainable production and consumption patterns threaten the global ecological balance — may well mirror the fate of mankind. It is for this reason that we want to condemn in particular the continued dumping of hazardous and radioactive wastes and materials into the Caribbean Sea and similar environments. Clear-headed and far-sighted calculations should therefore solidify our determination to summon the political will to fight alongside small islands in their quest for survival and sustainable development.

We have carefully studied the draft final document of this special session of the General Assembly. We agree with and fully support the central priorities that have been identified in the areas of climate change, natural and environmental disasters and climate variability, freshwater resources, coastal and marine resources, energy and tourism. We also applaud the careful thought that was given to designing the means of implementation, covering such diverse areas as sustainable development strategies, capacity-building, resource mobilization and finance, globalization and trade liberalization, transfer of environmentally sound technology, a vulnerability index and international cooperation, among others. We affirm in particular that the small islands deserve and must be accorded special consideration on account of their debilitating economic vulnerability as a result of size and environmental fragility as well as natural disasters.

Secondly, we believe that small island developing States deserve and must be accorded special treatment under existing multilateral trade arrangements.

Thirdly, we fully support the call by the small islands to be considered favourably for access to concessional resources towards the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. We should recommit ourselves to supporting the efforts of small island developing States to develop sustainably and to survive as an invaluable heritage.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the convening of the Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados in 1994 following the recognition of their special status in Rio in 1992 and the adoption of a

concrete plan of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States was a wise and forward-looking decision by the international community. We must recommit ourselves to its continuous and full implementation. This is the least that we can do in support of peoples and cultures to which nature seems to give so generously with one hand while threatening with the other to obliterate them, with the connivance of some irresponsible producers, consumers and polluters.

We wish this review session resounding success.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Eduard Kukan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia.

Mr. Kukan (Slovakia): Due to time constraints, I will limit myself to the main parts of my statement. The full text is available to all delegations.

I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the four Central European countries — the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia — which form the so-called Visograd group, a forum established in 1991 to promote regional policy coordination and cooperation in the area of foreign affairs, environment, education, culture, science and technology, infrastructure and transboundary issues.

On behalf of the countries of the Visograd group, I should like to take this opportunity to welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as new Members of the United Nations family. We are of the view that the recent admission of the three new Members to the United Nations, all of them small island developing States, came at the right time to allow them full participation in this special session.

The Visograd group countries support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in all of its 14 priority areas. We believe that the Barbados Programme of Action, which calls for actions to be implemented at the national, regional and international levels, provides for an integrated and comprehensive basis for the sustainable development of small island developing States.

We have come to this special session to review and appraise the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. The countries of the Visograd group are ready to contribute to the success of the special session, which should not be a mere repetition of what we already agreed in Barbados five years ago but a forward-looking and action-oriented exercise — a true follow-up.

In this global world, we all have to bear global responsibility. One of the elements of this global responsibility is to recognize the special vulnerability of small island developing States, in particular in the economic and environmental areas. The Visograd countries, as it was also stressed at the meeting of Prime Ministers and the meeting of the Ministers of Environment of the Visograd group countries in Slovakia in May this year, support a coherent and integrated approach to sustainable development, in which economic, environment, development and social policy issues cannot be isolated one from the other.

In 1994, when the Barbados Programme of Action was adopted, the process of globalization was not as evident as it is today. We are aware of the present problems of small island developing States in adapting to globalization and trade liberalization. We fully recognize the urgent need to facilitate the integration of small island developing States into the world economy, because only then will those States be able to benefit from the ongoing process of globalization and trade liberalization.

The four Visograd countries, as emerging donor countries, have a growing capacity to contribute to technical assistance and to science and technology development to participate in mutual trade and exchange of goods and even to provide for investment capital flows to small island developing States. The mutual trade between the Visograd countries and the small island developing States has been growing significantly in recent years, and we firmly believe that this trend will continue in future. There is a potential to increase mutual trade on both sides, in particular on the basis of the identification of investment opportunities in the small island developing States.

Moreover, the small island developing States have become a popular tourist destination for nationals of the Visograd group countries. The number of tourists flowing to the small island developing States from our region has been steadily growing in recent years. While we recognize the economic benefits of tourism for the small island developing States, we share their concern for its sustainability and ecological dimension. In this context, we welcome the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its seventh session, on sustainable tourism, and we support its application, as appropriate, to small island developing States.

One of the most important tasks of the international community in assisting the small island developing States is to successfully combat global warming. Only a genuine effort by all countries will be able to bring about long-lasting effects. I am proud to say that the countries on behalf of which I am speaking today have all fulfilled their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to stabilize emissions of greenhouse gases at base-year level. We have even achieved significant reductions in emissions. Unfortunately, we all know that the commitments undertaken in the Convention were not sufficient to meet its ultimate objective, which is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

That is why our countries, although aware of the economic and social costs involved, are working with determination, together with the small island developing States, on the elaboration of the Kyoto Protocol to the Convention. All the Visograd group countries have already signed the Kyoto Protocol. I wish to state very clearly at this forum that the countries of the Visograd group are committed to implementing their greenhouse gas reduction targets. However, we are concerned about the slow progress being made in elaborating the rules in some key areas, which the Protocol does not formulate in detail. The Polish Minister of Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry, Mr. Jan Szyszko, as President-designate of the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, is committed to making considerable step forward in building up consensus on pending issues. Without significant progress in negotiations in Bonn this autumn, the early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol will be imperilled. Climate safety is a vital issue for the sustainable development of small island developing States. Therefore, the implementation of the provisions of the Protocol by all parties is essential for the future of small island States.

Small island developing States have a limited capacity to respond to and recover from natural and environmental disasters, which they face year after year. This is one of the main areas of concern for the international community. We fully adhere to the commitment to assist small island developing States in establishing and strengthening national and regional institutional mechanisms and policies designed to reduce the impact of natural disasters, to improve disaster preparedness and to integrate natural disaster considerations into development planning. We also believe that the utmost attention should be given to an early-warning mechanism as one of the crucial elements in the field of disaster preparedness.

In May 1998, the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, with the participation of more than 2,000 delegates from all parts of the world. As emphasized in chapter IX of the Barbados Programme of Action, the biological diversity of small island developing States is due to the small size, isolation and fragility of island ecosystems, which are among the most threatened in the world.

My statement, which is being made on behalf of the Visograd group countries, is evidence of growing regional and international cooperation and solidarity. By the same token, I cannot fail to say how impressed we all are by the prevailing spirit of solidarity among 42 small island developing States which have found a common language, although they are located in different corners of our planet. This is the kind of solidarity which we can all learn from. Now it is up to the rest of the international community to show its will and interest in helping the small islands overcome big problems. This Assembly provides the right opportunity to do so.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency The Honourable Hilda Kari, Minister of Forestry, Environment and Conservation of Solomon Islands.

Ms. Kari (Solomon Islands): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Solomon Islands, I wish to express my sincere congratulations to Mr. Gurirab on his election as President of the General Assembly at its twenty-second special session to review and appraise the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. I am confident that under his able leadership, this session will chart the future course of the successful implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. I am also grateful to the Commission on Sustainable Development for serving as the preparatory body for this special session during its seventh session under the skilful chairmanship of New Zealand's Minister for the Environment.

Solomon Islands supports the statement made this morning by the Prime Minister of Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States. I wish, however, to reiterate some of the issues raised so far as they relate to

my country's efforts and priorities in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The Barbados Programme of Action is a product of the Rio process. It is therefore bound to the principles and ideals of Agenda 21. Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 outlines the special problems of small island developing States, noting a combination of factors giving rise to their vulnerability: small size, ecological fragility, isolation from markets, geographic dispersion and limited resources. The Convention on climate change, the Biodiversity Convention and the United Nations Agenda for Development have also acknowledged the unique situation of small island developing States and their need for international support. While the economic and ecological vulnerabilities of small island developing States are shared by many developing countries, they affect small island developing States in ways that magnify the risks and therefore demand greater and more urgent action. In this regard, efforts to produce a composite vulnerability index must continue to be supported. Such an index would assist in determining the level of international support that small island developing States would require in order to cope with the formidable challenges of sustainable development.

Despite the increasing global recognition and significance attached to the sustainable development of small island developing States, international action towards the execution of the Barbados Programme of Action in the past five years has been unsatisfactory. While the primary responsibility for the implementation of the Programme of Action lies first and foremost with small island developing States, assistance from the international community is imperative, a fact that we will continue to repeat.

Solomon Islands has taken, and will continue to take, measures to carry out the Programme of Action. Our national environmental management strategy, produced in 1993, is our blueprint for the management of our environment. This national environmental management strategy is a manifestation of my country's recognition of the importance of our environment and its resources for the health, welfare and development of our communities.

It incorporates various sectors identified in Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action, including biodiversity and coastal, marine and land resources. The Department of Forests, Environment and Conservation is the focal point for the implementation of our environment-management strategy, and it coordinates the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Furthermore, my Government has enacted national legislation on wildlife protection and management, the environment, forestry and fisheries. A sustainable tuna-management plan has been completed under our new Fisheries Act and, thanks to the Australian Government, our forestry-management plan is also in position. Our medium-term development strategy for 1999-2001, while promoting sound economic growth and ensuring the provision of adequate social services, also attempts to address some of the environmental concerns of the Programme of Action. Moreover, Solomon Islands has acceded to or ratified a number of environment treaties, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Conventions on biodiversity and on desertification.

Regional cooperation is a vital mechanism for action under the Programme. Implementation of the Programme of Action has had some success in our region. Solomon Islands is participating in a number of regional programmes such as the Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme, the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme, the South Pacific International Waters Strategic Action Programme and the South Pacific Economic Action Plan. There is a need to ensure greater collaboration among and between small island developing States of different regions through the development of common approaches to address common problems, and through the exchange of experiences and information. In this regard, the role of the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNET) is vital; there should be continuing support for the Network's efforts.

The implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action needs to go beyond the adoption of national policies and legislation. However, inadequate financial resources and lack of capacity remain major obstacles to the wider and timely implementation of our programmes and projects. These constraints are being compounded by the overall decline in official development assistance flows, falls in commodity prices, limited market access, heavy debt burdens and the increasing economic threats associated with globalization and trade liberalization. Most small island developing States, including Solomon Islands, rely heavily on official development assistance for our development endeavours. Resource mobilization is therefore one of the main challenges for the international community.

While our concern with resource constraints is by no means new, all partners and stakeholders must address it with new resolve if this special session is to provide the required impetus to carry out the Programme of Action. Adequate, predictable and new and additional financial

resources, as called for in chapter 33 of Agenda 21, are essential for the successful implementation of the Programme of Action. Equally important are capacity-building through education and training, awareness-raising, institutional strengthening and coordination, and availability of and access to appropriate environmentally sound technologies.

The meeting of small island developing States and of donors held in February 1999 needs appropriate follow-up action. The project proposals that were presented during that meeting are based on original national strategies and plans for the implementation of the Programme of Action. My Government has been working to fine-tune our project proposals; we are prepared to undertake further consultations with interested donors and other funding entities.

Finally, the role of the United Nations system in creating an enabling international environment is critical. We need the United Nations to confront the risks posed by globalization and to harness its opportunities. The activities of United Nations agencies in small island developing States should also be consistent with the national and regional priorities to ensure the effective utilization of resources and the coordinated implementation of the Programme of Action. Among other priority sectors and issues for Solomon Islands are the following: conservation of the biodiversity of its territory, coastal and marine resources, land resources and agriculture and energy resources. Measures of adaptation to cope with climate change and sea-level rise are fundamental, along with effective strategies for natural disaster preparedness and mitigation. The successful implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in the future requires renewed commitments and effective partnerships at all levels. Coordination of activities, including donor initiatives, is essential. New and additional resources are critical to making the difference. Capacity-building is a key priority across all areas of the Barbados Programme of Action.

I hope that the outcome of this special session will provide a sound basis for further action by all partners and stakeholders. Solomon Islands is committed to doing its part. We invite others to join in our collective efforts to make sustainable development an achievable goal for our island communities in the new millennium.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I call next on Mrs. Maria Minna, Minister for International Cooperation of Canada.

Mrs. Minna (Canada) (*spoke in French*): As Canada's recently appointed Minister for International Cooperation, this is my first address to the United Nations, an organization that represents the world's hope for peace and development. I am very pleased to have this opportunity to participate in this special session of the General Assembly. As our past involvement with small island developing States bears out, the issues before the Assembly are of particular interest to Canada.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada supports and will continue to support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Small island developing States have been a priority in Canada's official development assistance for more than 30 years. So far we have supported over 500 projects in coastal and small island developing States. In the process, we have acquired an understanding of the development challenges that face small countries surrounded by water. They also include such universal issues as poverty reduction and human-resource development, as well as meeting the challenges of globalization and taking advantage of its opportunities.

Of course, Canada has a good foundation, one on which we intend to continue building. In 1997, for instance, we extended our involvement in South Pacific ocean management, in cooperation with the South Pacific Forum. The seven-year Canada-South-Pacific Ocean Development Programme continues its work in ocean management, institution-building and marine environmental protection. Last March, we initiated the implementation of an environment capacity project with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), which also focuses on coastal and marine resource management, capacity-building and strengthening communications in the OECS region.

Our experience confirms an important premise on which the Barbados Programme of Action is based, namely that some of the most urgent issues that small island developing States face are related to the seas that surround them. We understand the special requirement for small island developing States to work closely with their neighbours. They need to pool individual resources and to pursue common interests. They also need to fulfil overlapping responsibilities, such as the environmental protection of the seas they share and the building of regional institutional structures. In these cases, the regional approach is the only one that works.

Partnerships are the key to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and of the actions included in the document that we expect to come out of this special session. The partnership between small island developing States and the international community is critical in achieving sustainable development. Canada certainly encourages the development of partnerships between the various stakeholders, in particular non-governmental organizations, local communities and the private sector.

(*spoke in French*)

These universally shared interests have important implications for the planning of official development assistance strategies. First of all, the hard-won operational experience and expertise that Canada and its partners have gained in certain small island developing States are potentially useful for their counterparts in other parts of the world; I mention as an example our activities in the eastern Caribbean and South Pacific programmes I mentioned a moment ago.

More fundamentally, and this is particularly important, at a time when we should be making the most of limited resources, we must be aware that we have a vast and growing reservoir of experience. We must set about sharing more this important international resource.

(*spoke in English*)

This resource, this experience, can and should play an important part in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. It should be accessible wherever it is relevant, and we are thinking about what we can do to make it that way. The option we have been looking at would be to maximize the benefits generated through the Canadian International Development Agency's regional programme experience in small island developing States by improving the interregional transfer of the knowledge and experience they generate.

I have said that Canada recognizes the singular nature of the challenges that small island developing States face. I must add, in closing, that we are also aware of how important small island developing States are in the wider scheme of things, with respect to the world community, the world environment and the world economy.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Hiroshi Yamamura, Minister for Internal Affairs of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Yamamura (Marshall Islands): I bring Mr. Gurirab warm greetings and congratulations on his election to preside over this important special session of the General Assembly from President Imata Kabua of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The President was unable to be present here due to urgent Government matters.

It is a pleasure for me to personally welcome and congratulate the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga on their admission as full Members of the United Nations.

A comprehensive version of this statement is being circulated; I will summarize a few of its points.

My delegation fully endorses the statements made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and by the Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Our late president, Mr. Amata Kabua, returned from the Rio Conference full of enthusiasm and hope. At the Barbados Conference, the Marshall Islands delegation was optimistic that a new dawn of international dialogue with the small island developing States was about to ensue. The Barbados Conference laid down the fundamental principles of cooperation that our President had endorsed at Rio. The results of Barbados, the Declaration and the Programme of Action, are great documents that we have incorporated into our national deliberations.

It is my pleasure to announce the completion of the domestic preparations for the establishment of the national commission on sustainable development in order to ensure that all the chapters of the Barbados Programme of Action, as well as Agenda 21, are translated into tangible policies and concrete project proposals for the Marshall Islands. National priorities and assessments of progress will be established within the context of each chapter. We are also looking at how we can integrate the decisions and conclusions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as of major gatherings such as this one.

While the Marshall Islands is seeking to be proactive in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, overall progress will be achieved only through proactive actions by the international community as well. The decline in financial and technical support is quite alarming. What little has been received has been limited and has come mostly from our long-time friends. It is

clear that the Barbados Programme of Action has brought us little new in terms of financial support for sustainable development projects. We certainly have not seen what the Barbados Programme of Action describes as effective means, including adequate, predictable new and additional financial resources, in accordance with chapter 33 of Agenda 21.

We should reach a consensus on this aspect now. If we cannot, then the Barbados Programme of Action will be stood on its head. All small island developing States face the same problems, as recognized in the Barbados Programme of Action. Least developed as well as developing members of the Alliance should be given the appropriate assistance, bearing in mind their circumstances.

The Marshall Islands is a country on the front line of climate change. Our difficult situation is made more precarious for the future by the lack of progress in dealing with greenhouse gas emissions. We see little evidence that there will be a concrete, concerted effort by the countries primarily responsible for climate change — that the industrialized and rich countries will do anything serious until they themselves feel the effects of climate change. The tragic death and destruction resulting from the recent hurricanes are just a foretaste of what is to come.

The Marshall Islands hosted a workshop for the Alliance of Small Island States countries in Majuro in July of this year. We were able to welcome participants from all regions of the Alliance, as well as invited experts, through the generous support of our friends. My Government was asked to ensure the document adopted, the Majuro Statement on Climate Change, was brought to the attention of the international community, in particular at this special session. Consequently, with the assistance of the Secretary-General, we have been able to circulate this document for the special session.

In his opening statement to the workshop, the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Mr. Imata Kabua, stated that the issue of climate change was not simply a small island developing State issue. Clearly, it is a responsibility for all humankind to deal with. The cooperative outcome that was achieved by the workshop was, in our view, a welcome contribution to this aim.

Allow me also to thank the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNET) and to say that we are constantly impressed at how much it has been able to do with such limited resources. It is discouraging, however, that SIDSNET continues to have to do more with fewer resources than other agencies in a similar position.

The Marshall Islands has tried to do more than what is required of us in our response to climate change concerns. Even though our emissions are so low that they do not show up on the scales used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we are trying to get them even lower. We are currently in the process of finalizing a sustainable energy development policy that will focus on solar energy, among other things. This will become part of our overall national sustainable development efforts, and we will have targeted outcomes such as the reduction of our emissions and moving the economy away from fossil fuels to the extent possible.

We hope that others, especially those countries most responsible for our current predicament, will take similar steps.

The international community should be more cognizant of the consequences of climate change, which at this stage present major threats to small island developing States and low-lying coastal areas. We are a pragmatic group of countries, and we are seeking to cooperate, not to confront. But as my delegation has stated before, it is our considered view that our firm position is not unreasonable. If faced with eminent destruction, most other countries would have taken up arms.

Furthermore, the United Nations system must become more responsive to our modest requirements and our well-reasoned project proposals. We have been receiving some assistance over the last few years from the United Nations Development Programme, and my Government has welcomed this. But these are first steps and must be complemented by further action.

In this regard, we welcome the announcement of the strengthening of the Small Island Developing States Unit as a positive step towards this goal. We thank the Government of Norway for its generous support and contributions.

Finally, poverty eradication must be an integral part of our new commitment to sustainable development. Collectively, we can do this now. We have described this effort as being more than giving men fish for one day; we must teach them how to fish so that they can live and prosper independently.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Erroll Glenn Snijders, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Suriname.

Mr. Snijders (Suriname): Before the Rio Conference and the adoption of Agenda 21, successive Governments and the people of the Republic of Suriname, 90 per cent of which is covered by tropical rainforest, were able to recognize the need to pursue sustainable economic development, while at the same time safeguarding the environment. Thus they recognized their moral obligation to conserve the rainforest and a sound environment for future generations. The conservation measures that were applied were later on acknowledged in the Convention on Biological Diversity and the sustainable use of forests.

We are therefore proud of our impeccable record of dealing responsibly with the challenge of balancing the need for development and protection of the environment, as is evident in the many protected areas, covering various ecosystems, that exist in the country. Our protection measures cover wildlife, biodiversity, tropical rainforests and other ecosystems stretching from the coastal zones to deep into the interior of Suriname, encompassing more than 15 per cent of its territory.

Part of these protected areas is the recently created Central Suriname Nature Reserve, which covers 1.6 million hectares of pristine tropical rainforest. This Reserve will guarantee the preservation of one of the world most important ecosystems.

Following the adoption of Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action, the Government of Suriname acknowledged the necessity of strengthening its capacity for the sustainable management of its natural resources through, *inter alia*, the creation of appropriate institutional mechanisms to design and enforce sound environmental policies capable of countering the pressures and challenges arising from the promotion of economic development.

Through a presidential decree, the National Council for the Environment was created as an advisory body, with direct responsibility to the President of the Republic of Suriname, thus securing the involvement of the highest political authorities in an area of strategic concern to the nation. Furthermore, a National Institute for Environment and Development was established. It operates as an independent foundation to deal with operational activities, research and the enforcement of sound environmental policies.

In this respect, my Government would like to express its appreciation to the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations Development Programme for their contributions to our capacity-building efforts.

We are aware of the fact that the successful achievement of sustainable development demands a continuing reassessment of our policies in order to avoid irreparable damage to our environment. The increase in mining and wood-processing activities during the last few years has compelled us to create additional mechanisms to strengthen our capacity to reconcile economic demands with the protection of the environment. In this regard, we have recently created the Foundation for Forestry Management and Supervision, which will enforce existing laws and introduce new laws and regulations in the forestry and wood-processing sector in order to guarantee the sustainable use of our tropical rainforest.

The Government's measures and the activities of the National Institute for Environment and Development have been undertaken in cooperation with national as well as international non-governmental organizations, such as Conservation International and the World Wildlife Fund. These efforts have substantially increased public awareness of the fragility of our ecosystems and environment in the context of pursuing economic development. In implementing Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action, we have come to understand more fully how our own activities — as well as those, such as global warming and climate change, that are beyond our scope of influence — can jeopardize our continued efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Because of our low-lying coastline and the fact that 90 per cent of our citizens, infrastructure and economic activities are concentrated on the coast, Suriname, like many small island developing States, would be particularly vulnerable to the rise in sea level that global warming could cause. It is also worth mentioning that a sea level rise would not only endanger our vast mangrove forest, which is known in the region and to the international scientific community as an important spawning and nursery ground for deep-sea fish, shrimp species and other important marine life; such a rise would also endanger the nesting grounds of various species of sea turtles that are already under pressure from fishing activities around the world.

In this context, the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action is an urgent necessity for our country; hence our firm commitment to keep our end of the bargain. We must express, however, our deep concern that, while at the national level the small island developing States have seriously demonstrated their resolve to implement the Barbados Programme of Action, as they agreed to do five years ago, the adequate and predictable financial resources that the international community pledged to provide to support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action have not been fully provided. Moreover, during this time we have been confronted with an overall decline in concessional financial support to small island developing States, as well as by a substantial decline in official development assistance. The latter form of assistance is still a major source of development financing for small island developing States.

I would like to make an observation regarding two interrelated issues, namely, the desire of the wider Caribbean to declare the Caribbean Sea a special area in the context of sustainable development and the need to address the dangers related to the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive waste.

It is evident that the Caribbean Sea is of utmost importance, in particular for the small islands and other small developing States belonging to the Caribbean subregion. Hence, the protection of this semi-enclosed Sea is a matter of survival as should be recognized by the international community.

A first step in that direction is the acknowledgement of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. In this regard, it is appropriate that we seek ways also to address the issue of transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive wastes through these waters. The continual disregard for the genuine concern of the Caribbean community about the dangers of these shipments, which threaten their very survival, is unacceptable.

We are pleased with the decisions to be adopted at the special session, which will take care of shortcomings in existing international legal regimes, in particular regarding disclosure, liability and compensation in case of accident. We hope that, on the eve of the new millennium, we can clearly demonstrate that international solidarity and multilateralism are not mere words, but have a deeper meaning reflecting the highest principles of humankind.

Finally, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the growing new phenomenon of piracy and illegal fishing in our territorial waters, which seriously hamper our efforts to benefit in a sustainable manner from our marine resources. We believe that other small island developing States are facing similar problems and therefore call for the design of a common strategy to halt these illegal practices and appeal to the international community, and the United Nations system in particular, to assist us in this endeavour.

In conclusion, my delegation would like, first of all, to call for the strengthening of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and to recognize the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNET) as an important tool in our capacity-building efforts. Secondly, I would like to make an appeal to the participants in the 1994 Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States to enhance their support for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and to mutually address the sustainable-development needs of our small islands and small developing States.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Timothy Harris, Minister for Agriculture, Lands and Housing of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Harris (Saint Kitts and Nevis): The Government of the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis would like to commend Mr. Slade for his display of able leadership of the Alliance of Small Island States. I should also like to take the opportunity to officially welcome the Republic of Haiti to that body, mindful of its active involvement prior to the convening of this special session.

The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis has been consistently and loudly making the case for special consideration of the small island States, based on our vulnerability to a multiplicity of factors that can seriously impede our ability to sustain economic and social development. Our small size, fragile ecosystem, frequent exposure to natural disasters and migration put our ability to sustain growth under constant extreme stress. Limited domestic markets, limited opportunities for economies of scale, high dependency on a limited range of agricultural products and tourism leave Saint Kitts and Nevis at the mercy of the fluctuating fortunes of an international marketplace. These are some of the factors that impact the viability of small island States.

One should fully recognize that the Barbados Programme of Action addresses the development problems that are commonly faced by small island developing States. The Barbados Programme of Action focuses on those common environmental factors that influence and hinder social and economic progress. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, we have been addressing the Barbados Programme of Action in the following eight areas: climate change and sea-level rise; natural disasters; management of waste; coastal and marine resources; freshwater resources; land resources; tourism; and biodiversity resources. We have made commendable progress in each of these areas.

For small island developing States such as Saint Kitts and Nevis, the progress made so far has been the result of several components, one of which has been the contributions and assistance of donor agencies and countries. I would like therefore to place on public record our sincere appreciation and thanks to those donor agencies and countries and to express our wish for their continued support. This support is necessary if countries such as ours are to continue to work towards the realization of the full implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

Saint Kitts and Nevis supports the special draft resolution to declare the Caribbean Sea a special development area, especially in respect to the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive wastes. We earnestly expect that the member States, the international community and the United Nations system will actively support efforts to develop and implement this concept and take action to avert the threat of pollution from ship-generated waste as well as the accidental release of hazardous and noxious substances.

Critical action is also required to address issues such as trade liberalization, crime and drug trafficking, poverty alleviation and unemployment. These threaten the national security and viability of small island developing States. Interestingly, we find today an environment in which the economic efforts of small island developing States and our efforts to alleviate poverty are being undermined by an unjust trading system and economic regulations. In the case of the Caribbean region, traditional export crops, such as bananas in the Windward Islands and sugar in St. Kitts and Barbados, are facing hard times. International trade and economic relations are significant factors militating against poverty-alleviation programmes and activities in our small countries. These are issues that must be addressed in tackling the needs of small island developing States.

We believe that the vulnerability index not only needs to be completed in a speedy manner, but will require the full recognition of the United Nations if it is to have meaningful value in addressing the development issues facing small island developing States. It must be recognized that the Barbados Programme of Action is heavily slanted towards environmental management. This is understandable, given the fact that it is a close successor to the Rio Conference of 1992. It does not provide for action on certain kinds of social issues, including that of HIV/AIDS.

Clearly, there is therefore a need to develop instruments that encourage the type of relationship that small island States want. There is also the critical need for international agencies to meet obligations agreed to even before the 1994 Barbados Conference, and we refer specifically to the commitments under Rio. Of course, there is need to put on the table a proposal to conduct a full review of the Barbados Programme of Action in or about the year 2004.

There are numerous projects which require the critical support of the donor community in order to ensure their effective realization. The successful implementation of these projects would indeed redound to the benefit of our people and would translate into increased opportunity for all of our citizens.

In conclusion, I wish to stress our commitment to the principles set out in the Barbados Programme of Action to ensure the continued sustainable social and economic growth of small island States. However, I must again emphasize the inherent constraints in our capabilities and capacities, given the restraining factors I mentioned before. Therefore, we seek the continued support and assistance of donor agencies and countries in furthering the cause of small island developing States in bringing about greater equity in development.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Santiago Nsobeya Efuman, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Nsobeya Efuman (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to cordially and respectfully greet all the representatives of the Member States of the United Nations and the other members of the international community, as this is the first time I have addressed the General Assembly since my recent appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs and

International Cooperation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

I would like to recall that in his statement before the plenary General Assembly at the fifty-fourth session, on 23 September, the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea had the opportunity to fully describe the well-known characteristics of the international situation at the threshold of the third millennium. He also described my country's vision of the future in the light of the architecture of the current international system, and he formulated some concrete proposals to further the search for solutions to the many grave problems facing humanity, now and in the future, particularly the dilemma of the developing countries.

We congratulate the President of the General Assembly once again on his election and express our satisfaction that the work of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, devoted to the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, is under his skilful and able guidance.

My delegation welcomes the important work of the Secretary-General and the ever-growing awareness of the United Nations that if our countries are truly to share the immense benefits of the advances in science and technology during this century, international cooperation and solidarity for the overall development of our States must have new, fairer and more equitable methods of cooperation and assistance.

My country considers that this special session, because of its rich diversity, can, among other important things, synthesize a collective, thoughtful and sincere response to the question of whether, since the Rio Conference in 1992, the unanimous recognition by the international community of the complex and precarious situation of island developing States — be they large, medium-sized or small — has led to the support, solidarity and assistance required to supplement their own national efforts in order to enable them to address the enormous difficulties they face in achieving sustainable development, particularly in the most vulnerable sectors and those of highest priority.

If, despite the efforts made in various areas to attain this objective, the answer is still negative or ambivalent, as could certainly be inferred from the assessment that has brought us together here, we believe the second question before us is whether we — the United Nations, our partners, international donors, regional and subregional organizations and each State individually — should do now, if we do not want to succumb to the quickening, inexorable trend towards internationalization and globalization with their political and economic challenges for our countries.

In the final analysis, we need to establish concrete and effective measures to guarantee the maintenance of peace, security and stability in our countries as prerequisites for sustainable development. We cannot remain for ever at the mercy of and under the threat of destabilization and organized crime. We want to eradicate poverty, which seriously obstructs our efforts to consolidate democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and State governance. We want to provide basic social services — education, nutrition, sanitation, communications, transportation and information — to the people of our country, whose territory is divided between the mainland and the islands.

In order to face the spectre or the reality of marginalization, we need a response to the question of whether our States' economies will be able to be competitive within the rules of a globalized world and the question of the responsibility of international organizations and regional groups to facilitate our integration into such an economy. We also need a fair mechanism from the international community to lend aid and assistance to the island developing States in cases of natural disasters.

Someone will rightly ask "Why, if there are already mechanisms and strategies to cope with these challenges?" This is the very problem, because it is paradoxical that given so many great ideas, mechanisms and strategies, the problems persist and situations constantly become worse. Something must be happening when a normal and healthy individual to have difficulty walking.

It is important to recognize the commendable efforts, actions and programmes carried out resolutely by the organizations of the United Nations system, by regional institutions and by each State to make a contribution to and ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Seychelles Mahe Declaration.

For its part, Equatorial Guinea has embarked on a vast programme of action and national strategies that involve the entire civilian population, particularly women

and youth, to attain the objectives of sustainable development. What is needed is more resolute solidarity and support from the United Nations and the international community.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Among these efforts we would like to mention the national economic conference, held in Bata in 1997, which had as its objectives the involvement of all segments of society in defining the priorities for national development in all sectors, the designing of strategies for such development in the short, medium and long term and the rational use of oil resources to meet the needs of the most vulnerable sectors and to promote productivity for the sake of the harmonious development for our country.

Furthermore, my country also makes its modest contribution to the attainment of subregional integration in Central Africa, together with the member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States and of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming the importance my country attaches to the success of this special session and by invoking from this lofty rostrum of the United Nations the legitimate right of our States to development and survival.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Shaikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): The twenty-second special session of the General Assembly has been convened at a time when the world is witnessing a number of political, economic and scientific changes that have provided many opportunities for advancement, as well as economic and social development, while also bringing with them enormous challenges for a number of States, including island developing States.

In this respect, I would like to express my delegation's full support for the statement made earlier today by the President of the Republic of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The era of globalization, trade liberalization, the securing of resources necessary for sustainable development, the development of human resources and the preservation of the environment have imposed specific conditions that small island developing States are required to fulfil in order to integrate themselves into the world economy. This same era has imposed challenges whose effect is exacerbated by the small size of markets and the structural constraints that limit the capacity of these island States for diversification, expansion of their economic base and enhancement of their competitiveness. Furthermore, many of these countries continue to suffer from economic recession brought about by a number of factors, including the sharp decline in the prices of raw materials and basic commodities, debt accumulation and the decline in official development assistance.

The United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, was aware of the enormous challenges facing these States when it adopted the Programme of Action, now considered the starting point for the sustainable development of small island developing States, whose ability to protect themselves against natural disasters is indeed limited. Their resources are also insufficient to prevent environmental changes, such as the depletion of the ozone layer, global climate change, the greenhouse effect, rising sea levels, increasing water salinity and the scarcity of natural resources, such as water and minerals. All these challenges oblige the international community to assist these States, both materially and technically, so that they may be able to adapt to the era of trade liberalization and technological advancement, to participate in and integrate into the world economy and to comply with the World Trade Organization's conventions.

Relevant General Assembly resolutions charge the international community with a special responsibility vis-à-vis the small island developing States, which suffer from a scarcity of natural resources or depend primarily on depletable resources, with a view to enabling them to diversify the sources of their income and to overcome the problems they face.

The small island developing States, which take a keen interest in the success of the Barbados Programme of Action and the plans of action for sustainable development in their respective countries, confirm the need today for a review of the implementation of the international commitments made by the donor countries, by organizations of the United Nations system and by regional and international organizations to finance developing island States' sustainable development plans and projects. Such a review would consider the plans and projects that are being implemented or that will be

implemented during the period 1999-2003, through bilateral or multilateral assistance.

We are confident that if the Barbados Programme of Action were implemented effectively by donor States and organizations, it would be a practical reflection of the principles of interdependence, solidarity and cooperation within the international community. It would also be an important factor in alleviating the difficulties and impediments faced by many small island developing States, thus sparing them the burden of resorting to borrowing from international funds. In this respect, we hope that these States will strengthen and promote means and opportunities for cooperation among themselves through the exchange of information, expertise and experience.

The State of Bahrain is aware of the problems that beset the small island developing States; therefore, it has drawn up and implemented appropriate plans to address those problems, particularly the problem of the gradual depletion of natural resources and the scarcity of water resources. These plans include a national programme for the gradual phasing out of ozone-depleting substances, desalination projects, recycling of treated sewage and conservation of natural resources. Our development projects have led to the diversification of economic activity, to the proper management of natural resources and to the development of human resources by broadening the industrial base, creating a climate conducive to foreign investment and banking activity and upgrading the quality of public services and infrastructure; they also promote joint economic projects and the transfer of technology and provide opportunities for the private sector to play its full role as a central pillar in the structure of the national economy, with a view to enhancing economic and social development.

Basic infrastructure and the social, economic and training sectors in Bahrain account for over 70 per cent of the gross public expenditure and aim at spreading the benefits of development across the board. These efforts have in the last five years helped the State of Bahrain achieve an advanced position in the human development index, as stated in the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report*.

While taking pride in our national economic and social efforts, we should like to express our appreciation and gratitude for the assistance received from our brotherly Arab States, from friendly countries, from United Nations agencies and other international organizations and in particular from the United Nations Development Programme.

Bahrain has formed various national committees encompassing governmental and non-governmental institutions for the preparation and implementation of Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action. These fall within the framework of preparing a comprehensive national strategy for the enhancement of the national economy and the protection of the environment during the next millennium. They also take into account our national priorities in such fields as social development strategies for the twenty-first century, health and environment in the context of sustainable development, development of human resources in the field of meteorology, proper management of water resources, integrated environmental management against pollution caused by industrial activity, protection of the atmosphere and the enhancement of the capacity of the State's environmental research centre.

The State of Bahrain has put forward plans for two important projects in the field of biological diversity and integrated environmental management, with a view to obtaining financial and technical support through the Ministerial Conference of the small island developing States of the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, held in Malta in November 1998. The two plans were also submitted to the donors' conference for small island developing States held at United Nations Headquarters last February.

We hope that these projects will gain the support of the donor countries and the relevant international organizations, in particular the Global Environment Facility.

As we approach the twenty-first century, we look to the future with great hope and confidence that the international community will support the issues facing the small island developing States, namely, the challenges of balanced development and integration into the world economy, in view of the fact that such States are an integral part of the international community.

In the final analysis, the international community is duty-bound to work towards the accomplishment of the aspirations of the United Nations in reaching equitable solutions to the economic and social problems of all Member States and to achieve a dignified life for all humanity.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to recall that, in accordance with the decision taken this morning at this special session, each speaker's time is limited to five minutes. If this limit is not respected, as is often the case, we are likely to have extended meetings. On the other hand, if we respect the time limit, we may even be able to avoid having an evening meeting and to hear all of the speakers on today's list during this meeting.

I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Uschi Eid, Deputy Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany.

Ms. Eid (Germany): During the last few months we have experienced very intensive, constructive and forward-looking discussions on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. I want to express our appreciation to Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda for leading the negotiations and to the Secretariat for its efficient support of this process.

Since Germany supported the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action, we have welcomed the opportunity for an in-depth assessment of the implementation of those decisions and for underscoring the necessity to strengthen our joint efforts to secure a sustainable development path for small island developing States. This special session is proof of our continued commitment in this respect and also proof that the issues raised in the Barbados plan remain at the top of the political agenda.

I would like to endorse the statement made by the Minister of Finland, Mrs. Satu Hassi, on behalf of the European Union and underline some of the aspects of particular importance to the German Government.

In our view, the following lessons can be drawn from the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and should guide our future cooperation in this field.

First, sustainable development is a complex issue that requires intersectoral approaches and integrated planning at various levels. A great number of small island developing States are making great efforts to develop sustainable development strategies. I do not need to elaborate on that, as the Foreign Minister of Jamaica did so very eloquently this morning.

Secondly, the Barbados Programme of Action was right to emphasize the strengthening of institutional, technological and human capacities. These factors do indeed have a key role to play in terms of successful and sustainable development, and it goes without saying that human and institutional capacities are a prerequisite for addressing environmental, economic and social issues in the decision-making process simultaneously.

Thirdly, subregional or regional cooperation might bridge the gap for those countries which might not be in a position to avail themselves of all the necessary instruments to cope with emerging issues at the national level. Therefore, we will continue to support regional cooperation among small island developing States and with relevant institutions.

Fourthly, the review process underlined the importance of international trade as a prerequisite for sustainable development. This point has already been stressed by many speakers today. However, changes in the international trade regime could weaken terms of trade and lower national incomes. To fully exploit the opportunities of international trade in the medium term, further improvements in the provision of public goods, adjustment of domestic policies and strengthening of institutional and human capacities will be required. In this respect, development assistance can play an important role in helping enhance the capacity of small island developing States to maximize the benefits of the globalization process.

Germany is in favour of all endeavours that lead to better consideration of the special interests and needs of developing countries in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Therefore, Germany has provided up to 1 million deutsche marks to the WTO and DM 4 million to the International Trade Centre to support developing countries' capacities to participate on equal terms and play a stronger role in the forthcoming millennium round, held under the auspices of the WTO.

As a member State of the European Union, Germany will give full support to the efforts of the European Union during the next round of multilateral negotiations, under the auspices of the WTO, on international trade, as well as in the successor convention to Lomé. We would like to see a further reduction of the remaining trade barriers and small island developing States receiving even more secure access to export markets.

Fifthly, further consideration should be given by small island developing States to developing partnerships

with the private sector in order to increase the flow of much-needed private investment finance and technological transfer. Besides the agricultural sector, sustainable tourism and the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises offer further scope for the creation of employment and income opportunities, as well as the sustainable use of the rich natural resources of small island developing States.

Between 1994 and 1997, Germany made available to 33 small island developing States in all regions an amount of DM 233 million, through its bilateral financial and technical cooperation. For a number of reasons, Germany's cooperation with small island developing States will now mainly build upon existing programmes supported by the European Union, relevant regional organizations or multilateral funds such as the International Development Association. We are determined to support small island developing States in addressing all these issues to which I have referred and take this opportunity to renew our commitment to further implementing the Barbados Programme of Action. This requires especially sound and strong development-oriented domestic policies. We, for our part, should increase our efforts to facilitate better donor coordination, improve the quality of our aid programmes and seek innovative approaches by development, trade and finance institutions which are appropriate for coping with the special needs of small island developing States in the future.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Leiv Lunde, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Norway.

Mr. Lunde (Norway): The Barbados Programme of Action was the first concrete follow-up to the 1992 Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In the preparatory process for this special session, small island developing States have continued to demonstrate their willingness and ability to actively translate that Conference's decisions into concrete actions in the regional and national contexts. The state of progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action clearly demonstrate, however, that much still remains to be done to promote sustainable development in these States. Further progress depends primarily upon national action in and by the countries themselves. However, international cooperation, both regional and global, is also required if these efforts are to succeed.

There is a need to foster an enabling environment conducive to sustainable development, to strengthen capacity-building and to build partnerships. We must continue to focus attention on measures in key areas, such as limiting the impacts of natural disasters and climate variability, freshwater resources, coastal and marine resource management, sustainable energy and tourism. The capabilities of small island developing States to reap the benefits and to reduce negative impacts of globalization require continued attention.

Small island developing States are practically non-contributors to climate-change gas emissions and sealevel rise. Yet they are likely to suffer the most as a result of climate change. This particular vulnerability underlines that it is urgent to deal effectively with climate change, but also that small island developing States' participation and contributions in the climate change negotiations are of crucial importance.

Our sustainable future is a common, global responsibility. International action means action by all partners. In the context of the follow-up to the Barbados Programme of Action, Norway has this year put into force a special action plan for small island developing States. The elements of the action plan have been developed in close cooperation with small island developing States, and we have found the close collaboration with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in this effort most rewarding.

This morning I signed, on behalf of Norway, an agreement with Under-Secretary-General Nitin Desai, on behalf of the United Nations, to finance a small island developing States advisory function for a period of three years in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. It is my hope and belief that this initiative will assist the United Nations in providing timely and high-quality advice of key importance to small island developing States.

As an additional element of the Norwegian action plan, a joint Norway/AOSIS workshop was held in Lofoten, Norway, in August of this year to discuss areas for further progress and cooperation in the context of this special session. Representatives from small island developing States, regional organizations, bilateral donors, the United Nations and the World Bank participated. The report from the workshop is available at this meeting.

Norway also supports the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET), which we find to be an innovative use of information technology particularly suitable for small States with limited resources and geographically located over a very large area of the globe.

The measures I have mentioned are in addition to the continuing Norwegian contributions to multilateral institutions providing assistance to small island developing States. The measures have a strong emphasis on capacity-building and networking, tools that are key factors in improving sustainable development.

My Government also intends to continue its cooperation with small island developing States in the area of building partnerships to facilitate the financing and implementation of priority projects for sustainable development identified by small island developing States. The establishment of the small island developing States advisory function in the United Nations Secretariat is expected to be an important element in galvanizing international cooperation in this respect.

A number of sources must be used to ensure that the required resources become available. Domestic resource mobilization remains important. Official development assistance continues to be a valuable source for countries eligible for it. In addition, efforts should be made to build private/public and private/private partnerships both between small island developing States and with other countries. Enhancing access to international markets, promoting foreign investments and improving the flow of information on investment opportunities are also important measures to mobilize the resources needed. The Clean Development Mechanism, developed under the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, might be another tool for additional, innovative funding.

Multinational institutions have an important role to play. This special session must give strong and clear signals to the international financial institutions and United Nations organizations to provide appropriate assistance to small island developing States. Norway will maintain this view in our contacts with institutions such as the World Bank, the United Nations Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant forums.

Finally, we must not lose sight of the need for an integrated, cross-sectoral approach where environmental, economic and social concerns are addressed in a comprehensive manner. This special session means new opportunities to emphasize this aspect, as has been forcefully stressed by small island developing States themselves. Sustainable development is possible only if we succeed in making progress in all three of these arenas. We believe that the Barbados Programme of Action, updated and refined through this special session, provides an excellent basis for achieving this ambitious objective.

The Acting President: I now call on the Vice-Minister for International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, Mrs. Paulina García de Larrea.

Mrs. García de Larrea (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is with special pleasure that my delegation is speaking at this special session of the General Assembly devoted to the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We do so as an expression of solidarity given the problems facing those countries as a result of their location and particular features.

While, on the one hand, these island States attract the world's interest because of the natural wealth that enables them to enjoy a high level of tourism development, on the other hand they are extremely vulnerable ecologically and economically. Their geographical location also makes them fragile in the face of the natural disasters that are common to their environment, including hurricanes, sea level changes and the recurrent phenomenon of El Niño, among others. These conditions common to small island States have prompted the international community to examine carefully island States' special needs for cooperation to strengthen the bases and structures of their sustainable development and to protect and preserve their natural ocean heritage, the management of which constitutes one of the world's greatest environmental problems.

Ecuador believes that the effects of globalization should be taken into account when considering cooperation for small island States so as to facilitate their adaptation to the new global structures that are being consolidated and to facilitate the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted in 1994.

Ecuador would like to refer to the small island States located in the Caribbean, whose natural

environment of unique biodiversity is also very vulnerable to climate change and atmospheric phenomena, and presents limitations to their economic and social development. This is why we believe that the Caribbean and the countries located there should be integrated into the special programmes of sustainable development for small island States.

The serious effects of the El Niño phenomenon have had a cyclical impact on large parts of the earth. This impact has been greater on the countries of the eastern Pacific and the small island States. Ecuador has promoted the establishment in Guayaquil of an international centre for research into the El Niño phenomenon in order to expand scientific research into its naturally recurring changes, to achieve a better understanding of it and to be able to provide early warning as to its strength. This will help prevent and reduce its devastating effects by allowing for the development of timely national and international plans. We hope that this proposal will become a reality as soon as possible so as to provide support for national and international sustainable development policies and programmes, and that these will also benefit small island developing States.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Wang Guangya, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, was an important follow-up action of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development. The Programme of Action adopted at the Global Conference provides guidelines for addressing the sustainable development issues faced by small island developing States.

Over the past five years, with the unremitting efforts of small island developing States and assistance from the international community, there has been some progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action. The efforts deployed by small island developing States in formulating national strategies for environmental protection and sustainable development, strengthening environmental legislation and improving the functions of environment-related departments are particularly praiseworthy.

Likewise, regional cooperation among small island developing States has achieved marked results. At the same time, however, we have also noticed a considerable gap between the progress made and the objectives set forth in the Programme of Action. The official development assistance provided by the developed to the developing countries continues to decrease. Trade and other concessions previously enjoyed by developing countries have been drastically reduced. Hurricanes and other natural disasters caused by global environmental degradation have caused severe damage to small island developing States and added to their economic and social burdens.

The Asian financial crisis has also had a strong adverse impact on the export, tourism and investment inflows of small island developing States. What is particularly noteworthy is that, with the accelerated pace of globalization and ever-fiercer international competition, small island developing States are encountering increasingly grave challenges as a result of serious constraints such as lack of financial, technological and human resources.

As we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Barbados Global Conference, we must reaffirm the principles and spirit of the Programme of Action, take stock of existing obstacles and explore ways to resolve them, mobilize political will and reach action-oriented consensus.

It is true that the small island developing States will have to make their own efforts for development, but the vigorous support of the international community is indispensable given that economic globalization is creating unprecedented and fierce competition. The international community should pay closer attention to the small island developing States.

As for the next step in the implementation of the Programme of Action, I should like to stress the following points.

First, support from the international community should be intensified in the financial, technical and capacity-building areas so as to help the small island developing States overcome their difficulties. We are in favour of international organizations' accommodating the special needs of small island developing States in the allocation of posts and other aspects.

Secondly, the international community should encourage and support small island developing States in formulating their own strategies for sustainable development and in establishing priorities suited to their national conditions. They should take into full account the

characteristics and needs of small island developing States and help them achieve sustainable development.

Thirdly, the international community should assist the small island developing States in overcoming the challenges posed by economic globalization and help them explore and identify better ways to attract foreign investment and create more trade opportunities.

China is a developing country, and, like many small island States, faces the arduous task of developing its economy, protecting its environment and raising the living standards of its peoples. We full understand the difficulties of the small island developing States and sympathize with them. China has established friendly relations with many small island States and conducted fruitful cooperation with them, providing financial, technical and infrastructure construction assistance to the best of its ability.

China is willing to actively encourage enterprises to explore new fields and new approaches to economic and technical cooperation with small island developing States on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. China will, as always, support any reasonable requests by those States and wishes to further strengthen cooperation with them within the framework of South-South cooperation.

China stands ready to work with the international community and to make its proper contribution to the promotion of economic development and environmental protection of the small island developing States.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Martin Andjaba, Chairman of the delegation of Namibia.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): It has been five years since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and seven years since the affirmation of our collective commitment to safeguard Mother Earth through the implementation of Agenda 21.

However, if we analyse the overall balance sheet of the global environment, the situation remains precarious. The environmental problems confronting small island developing States are in fact a reflection of our global problems. Diminishing forests and biodiversity, declining fisheries, limited sources of freshwater, and fragile coastal and marine ecosystems are threatening the livelihood of the communities of small island developing States.

Due to the size of small island developing States, freshwater and coastal ecosystems are interconnected and, as a result, pollution discharges affect the coastal marine systems, which in turn threaten biodiversity. In addition, population growth puts pressure on water supplies in the small island developing States. It is against this background that the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action is so important to developing countries in general and small island developing States in particular.

The aftermath of the international financial crisis that affected South-East Asian countries and the destruction caused by Hurricane Mitch, which swept through the Caribbean and Central American States and whose impact continues to be felt today, testifies to our common vulnerability to environmental catastrophes and therefore warrants greater solidarity among us all. Both events — the financial crisis and the natural disaster — demonstrated that in the contemporary global environment, small developing States are more vulnerable than others. It is therefore essential for the international community to provide assistance, both financial and in kind, to developing countries, in particular the small island developing States, so as to ensure proper training and information dissemination and thereby facilitate the implementation by States of their programmes to achieve sustainable development. Small island States are the custodians of our oceans and marine environment. If we are to meet our commitment to sustainable development, the international community should redress the decline in net disbursements of bilateral and multilateral aid from $2.36 billion in 1994 to $1.96 billion in 1997.

As we review the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, we should reflect the principle elements of Agenda 21 while at the same time outlining specific steps which need to be taken individually or collectively to assist small island developing States to develop innovative projects, including, *inter alia*, sustainable tourism, the long-term maintenance of clean water, air and land resources and human and institutional capacity-building. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the Global Environment Facility, among others, in supporting the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

As one of the most arid States, Namibia understands the importance of the implementation of the Programme of Action. We share some characteristics of small island developing States, such as the fragility of our ecosystem,

vulnerability to climate change and economic vulnerability. We also welcome the 11 gauges set up in South Pacific States to monitor sea level rise and the strengthening of the tide gauge monitoring network for the Global Oceanic Observation System in the Caribbean, as well as the ratification of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by almost all the small island States.

Namibia acknowledges the results of the donors' meeting on small island developing States, held from 24 to 26 February this year, in particular its emphasis on the commitment to and ownership of the Programme of Action on the part of the small island developing States, as elucidated through consideration of a compendium of national and regional project proposals. We also note with appreciation the efforts made by these States to meet their priorities and objectives in a manner consistent with the Programme of Action.

The Commission on Sustainable Development has continued to attract a growing number of Ministers every year. This confirms the commitment of the international community to address the problems facing all countries, especially developing countries. Let us use this special session to galvanize the necessary political will in order to generate momentum to eradicate poverty and enhance global prosperity in a sustainable manner.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Danilo Türk, Chairman of the delegation of Slovenia.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): Slovenia associates itself with statement delivered earlier today by Mrs. Satu Hassi, Minister for Environment and Development Cooperation of Finland, who spoke on behalf of the European Union and associated countries. I wish to make some additional points.

Slovenia is strongly committed to the implementation of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, the blueprint for global sustainable development adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. We are also intensely aware of the problems of the implementation of that blueprint and of the diversity of the tasks involved. The problems of small island developing States must be given the highest priority. This was clear even at the time of the Earth Summit. Convening the Barbados Conference was therefore natural and necessary. The environmental and economic fragility of the small island developing States has been generally recognized as a problem requiring the most urgent consideration. The United Nations should be satisfied with the momentum created at the level of political understanding and institutional improvement. This helped in creating the policy approaches intended to assist small island developing States. As the President of Micronesia remarked in his statement earlier today,

> "Although progress has been slow, we are beginning to see some benefits through such institutions as the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Development Programme." (*A/S-22/PV.1, p. 13*)

These and other instruments, including the Lomé Convention, represent the necessary basis from which further efforts must proceed. However, the special case of small island developing States requires much more than has been achieved thus far. More needs to be done in both of the basic areas of action: environmental protection and economic development. It is widely recognized that the critical environmental problems, especially global warming and sea level rise, affect most dramatically the small island developing States — precisely those States which are the least responsible for global climate change. The future of the ecological situation of the small island developing States is a truly global responsibility. Effective action is needed to stop and reverse the trends of global warming and to address other environmental challenges to the future of small island developing States.

The vulnerability of small island developing States also has an economic dimension. Changes in international commodity prices and in the general demand for goods affect them in a variety of ways. More often than not, these changes represent a direct cause of economic problems, poverty and social disintegration. Recognition of these problems, which we have heard repeatedly in the discussion today, must lead to specific action in the future. One area of action lies in the realm of methodology. The completion of the vulnerability index will help in assessing the effects and the needs of the most severely affected small island developing States.

Finally, and most fundamentally, these States clearly need special attention in international trade and in other spheres of international economic cooperation. While trade liberalization provides an opportunity for all States, small island developing States are clearly among those which need the assistance of the international community, including the United Nations, both in the effort to improve their competitiveness and, in those cases when

it is necessary, in the provision of special and preferential treatment in the multilateral trading system.

Since the Barbados Conference, five years ago, small island developing States have been continuously striving for the implementation of their commitments under the Programme of Action. This special session of the General Assembly should be able to make a real and meaningful contribution to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Let us ensure that such a contribution is made.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Nikolai V. Tchoulkov.

Mr. Tchoulkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the sustainable development of small island developing States. Owing to their circumstances, these countries are in a special and less favourable situation in terms of the availability of natural resources, energy, drinking water, land and other elements of development. The development problems of these countries are exacerbated by their distance from key markets, their vulnerability to the devastating impact of natural disasters and other economic perils.

At the same time, these States possess unique potential thanks to the wealth of experience they have gained, their cultural development, which includes a valuable heritage of tradition, and their access to the wide reaches of ocean, which contain a significant part of the world's biodiversity. For many small island States, the seas and oceans that surround them are a valuable part of the common heritage of mankind; therefore, solving their problems is the responsibility of the entire international community.

The 1994 Barbados Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was an important milestone in the international community's awareness of the specific difficulties facing small island States and of their special needs for sustainable development. It was a clear demonstration of international partnership and solidarity. The Programme of Action adopted at that Conference remains relevant to this day.

As a result of active efforts, principally by small island States themselves and also on the regional and international levels, some progress has been achieved over the past five years in implementing the provisions of the Barbados Programme of Action, especially in terms of integrating the environmental dimension into social and economic development strategies and policies. We welcome further efforts to that end, and we welcome the steps taken by international and regional organizations to implement the Programme of Action.

But these five years have also highlighted the significant difficulties faced by small island developing States in achieving their objectives. If these countries are to achieve sustainable development, a further and more effective effort must be made to assist them. There must be more active and consistent activities in support of their national efforts, along with measures for capacity-building, improving coordination and a focused strengthening of human potential.

Facilitating the transfer of environmentally sound technology, especially with respect to averting the negative effects of possible climate change; improving the capability to respond to natural disasters and to address problems of drinking water; the protection of coastal ecosystems; the development of new and renewable sources of energy; the sustainable management of tourism in a way that will preserve the environment and cultural authenticity and identity: all these are of critical importance.

In working towards those objectives, the problems of small island developing States cannot be viewed in isolation from global problems of environment and development. The successful solution of these problems can come about only with complementarity among the relevant efforts to achieve sustainable development. We welcome proposals for concrete initiatives aimed at promoting the sustainable development of small island developing States. We believe that approaches to this problem should be formulated within the framework of existing agreements and international legal instruments adopted by the competent multilateral institutions within the United Nations system. Unswerving compliance with the norms and principles of international law will guarantee the effectiveness and efficiency of these efforts.

Given the broad similarity of the problems facing small island developing States, we must be careful to ensure that approaches to resolving those problems reflect the specific development needs and characteristics of each country. Hence, it is very important for the international community to identify individual criteria and accordingly to adjust its approach to addressing the problems of specific countries or groups of countries.

For its part, Russia remains ready to use its scientific and technological capabilities and its gains in the study of the world's oceans to provide practical assistance to the development efforts of small island developing States. In that context, we are encouraged by the model of tripartite cooperation under the auspices of the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions.

The United Nations system itself must continue to play the role of catalyst and stimulant in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action; it must make more effective use of existing resources and improve the coordinating machinery for focused, agreed implementation activities in priority areas for the achievement of the sustainable development of small island developing States.

We are confident in the usefulness of this special session. The productive and intensive work of the Commission on Sustainable Development acting as preparatory body for the special session has enabled us to formulate a balanced, realistic and forward-looking draft final document, which will be a new and important step towards the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and towards the full realization of the objectives of Agenda 21.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. André Adam, Chairman of the delegation of Belgium.

Mr. Adam (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): In the context of the item before the Assembly at this special session, I wish to renew my delegation's congratulations to the three island States that have just joined the United Nations family: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. I wish also to convey my gratitude to Ambassador Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda for the stamina and high talent with which he guided the preparatory work for the special session of the General Assembly on small island developing States.

I fully associate myself with the statement made by Mrs. Satu Hassi, Minister for Environment and Development Cooperation of Finland, as representative of the presidency of the European Union. Specifically, I endorse her comments on the role of the Lomé Convention, which has been the basis for the provision of appropriate support to many small island States.

For many of us, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro, was our first contact with small island States and their special characteristics. It was at Rio that we learned that beautiful atolls were already under threat from a rise in sea level, and that the survival of entire communities was in jeopardy. At a very early stage, my country and its European partners recognized the key importance of this issue. That is why the small island States and the European Union acted as natural allies during the negotiations leading to the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as its 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Belgium participated actively in the Rio Summit, as well as in efforts to implement the outcome. Indeed, at the national level, Belgium was one of the first countries to introduce eco-taxes that penalize pollutant emissions and promote investment in clean technologies.

As the first post-Rio conference, the summit in Bridgetown was rightly dedicated to small island States. It provided them with a common and recognized identity, as well as a framework for action to alleviate the specific constraints facing them. Five years later, this special session of the General Assembly demonstrates that the commitments of Barbados are still relevant. This session is the best way to convene the global community to take stock of actions taken and to consider possibilities for the future.

At this time of review and appraisal, let me note that the most crucial impact of the Barbados Conference has been an intangible but real one: the special concerns of small islands States have been recognized as such by the global community and have been tackled collectively as such by the members of the Alliance of Small Island States.

Indeed, the Barbados Conference and the various follow-up meetings generated a dynamic of solidarity and joint efforts that has allowed the small island developing States to work out together a common agenda that encompasses all the challenges facing them, well beyond environmental problems alone.

Concrete progress has also been achieved along the lines laid out in the Barbados Programme of Action, thanks to national and regional efforts and the assistance of the international community. To cite but a few examples, let me mention the innovative projects funded by the Global Environment Facility, the Global Oceanic Observation System, the progress in coastal and fisheries resource management, Internet connectivity in almost all the small island developing States and the establishment

of the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET). These examples give a far from complete picture of the considerable progress achieved. However, this should be no reason for complacency.

The most vulnerable among the small island developing States, the least developed countries, still lack the resources to carry out programmes promoting sustainable development on their own. Further assistance from the international community is required to help them face their specific constraints. In their case, the challenges of poverty eradication stand out clearly since they are linked to those of sustainable development.

The Belgian delegation fully recognizes the specific vulnerabilities of small island States. It understands that careful consideration of these vulnerabilities could, if necessary, be a useful component of criteria currently used for making decisions about cooperation. Belgium also considers that assistance should remain essentially focused on the needs of the most vulnerable States.

Apart from its contributions to the Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Development Programme and the Lomé Convention among others, the Government of Belgium allocated $7.15 million bilaterally for various initiatives and projects in small island developing States in 1998.

On behalf of the Government of Belgium, I wish to reiterate my country's continued commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Barbados Conference as part of the international partnership that is essential not only for the small island developing States, but for all parts of our global village.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Yukio Satoh, Chairman of the delegation of Japan.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): This special session is indeed an epoch-making occasion. We have gathered here for the first time to review comprehensively the implementation of the Programme of Action that we adopted five years ago in Barbados.

Japan welcomes this opportunity, and I assure the Assembly that my country will do its best in order to make this special session yet another step forward towards our common goal of sustainable development for small island developing States. As an island nation, Japan shares a broad range of interests and concerns with small island developing States. For a long time, we have been making painstaking efforts to strike a balance between the requirements of development and growth and the need to preserve our natural environment. That is why Japanese people appreciate the concerns and aspirations of small island developing States. I represent that appreciation here today. That is also why Japan is proud of having participated in the international efforts to render support to the sustainable development of these countries.

There is no doubt that it is essential for small island developing States to make their own efforts in the spirit of ownership in order to overcome the unique difficulties they face, difficulties which derive from their geographically disadvantaged positions. Yet it is also important for the international community to extend assistance to support these self-help endeavours of small island developing States. Recognizing this, Japan has been engaged in various forms of multilateral cooperation aimed at making progress in implementing the Programme of Action adopted at the Barbados Conference in 1994.

Japan has also been engaged in regional dialogues, such as the Japan-South Pacific Forum summit meeting of 1997 and the Japan-Caribbean Community annual consultation, which has been held since 1993. These dialogues have led to concrete projects, such as seminars of technical experts on the environment in Caribbean Community countries, the construction of the International Coral Reef Centre in Palau, which serves as a regional research and educational centre, and a survey mission for the construction of the environmental training and educational centre of the South Pacific regional environmental plan in Samoa.

Japan has also engaged in bilateral cooperation with many small island developing States. During the four years following the 1994 Barbados Conference, our bilateral assistance to these countries increased by 30 per cent. Japan is among the top contributors of assistance to these island States, providing one fifth of the total assistance by the Development Assistance Committee countries. Japan recognizes the continued importance of official development assistance to developing countries, particularly small island developing States. Japan is therefore determined to do its utmost to further strengthen and expand its official development assistance in the coming years, despite severe budgetary constraints stemming from Japan's own economic difficulties.

Japan advocates the international community's giving prior consideration to human security concerns as

we enter the next millennium. In this context, we recognize that one of the unique human security concerns small island developing States face is their vulnerability to climate change. Rising sea levels and the increasing frequency of storms and hurricanes are real threats to human security in each of these States. It is for the purpose of alleviating such human security concerns that Japan has extended financial cooperation to several small island States for the construction of sea walls to protect their shores against damage from high tides. Japan has also extended emergency assistance to Caribbean countries that have suffered from hurricanes. Certainly, the Kyoto Protocol is an important instrument for coping with global-warming issues, and Japan places top priority on its prompt and smooth implementation. We believe that only by creating a mechanism for clean development, as well as other highly reliable and feasible systems, can we take effective measures against global warming.

Before concluding, I would like to draw representatives' attention to the side event on the impact of natural disasters on small island developing States, which Japan is co-sponsoring with Papua New Guinea and which will be held tomorrow. The purpose of the event is to show the results of the analysis carried out by the Japanese marine science and technology centre on the generation and propagation of tsunamis, with a particular focus on the state of the seabed in tsunami-prone areas. We hope that this event will enlighten us all on how to minimize the damage from future natural disasters.

It is in our common interest to make further progress on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. This special session will serve as a catalyst to draw more of the attention of the international community to the diverse issues facing small island developing States and to give new momentum to international cooperation to cope with these problems.

For our part, Japan is fully committed to our common goal of ensuring the sustainable development of small island developing States and is determined to make its best effort in the coming years in order to attain this goal.

The Acting President *(spoke in French):* I now give the floor to Mr. Alain Dejammet, Chairman of the French delegation.

Mr. Dejammet (France) *(spoke in French):* The preparations for this special session demonstrated the international community's dedication to the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action. We share the conviction of the small island developing States that this document, which highlighted their environmental fragility and economic vulnerability, is still fully relevant and still provides a suitable framework for these States' national sustainable development strategies.

Much progress has been made over the last five years, and France would like to praise the bold policies implemented by many small island developing States in order to overcome their structural handicaps. As regards the environment, the drafting of action plans and national strategies, the strengthening of institutional capacities and legislative strategies — all this deserves our praise as well.

However, the effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Actin has been hampered by the economic difficulties encountered by many of the small island developing States in recent years and sometimes by their lack of qualified personnel or the weakness of their administrative capacities. In this context, external assistance remains a vital resource for the vast majority of small island developing States. France, for its part, is determined to continue to support these States, as it has in the past.

France, in fact, remains the world's third largest aid donor, in 1998 providing nearly $6 billion in official development assistance — or 0.4 per cent of France's gross domestic product. In percentage terms, this is far and away the most substantial effort by any of the G-7 countries. This effort is directed first and foremost at the poorest countries, in particular the least developed countries. But in allocating assistance France also takes into account the vulnerability of countries.

Since the beginning of 1998 France has been reorganizing its development cooperation mechanisms. Under this reform, bilateral aid, which accounts for 75 per cent of the overall assistance, has been concentrated on a priority solidarity zone, which is defined and periodically updated by an inter-ministerial committee under the authority of the Prime Minister. The zone currently includes the following small island developing States: Vanuatu, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Haiti, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and all the African small island developing States — namely Cape Verde, the Comoros, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe and Seychelles. Small island developing States not included on this list can nevertheless receive support through certain specific instruments, such as the French fund for

the global environmental, the Caribbean fund and the Pacific fund.

This is why France is one of the leading donors to the small island developing States. In 1996, which is the latest year for which complete data is available fro the Secretariat, France allocated more than $110 million to the small island developing States. The main recipients were Haiti, Sao Tome and Principe, Vanuatu, Saint Lucia, Mauritius, Cape Verde and the Comoros. This aid is highly diversified, both geographically — since it is given to island States in three oceans — and as regards the nature of the projects, and it attempts to relate as closely as possible to the concerns of the island States themselves.

We are particularly interested in the problems of the small island developing States. Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Actio have called attention to how the island nature of these States renders them especially vulnerable. The geographic situation of France's overseas departments and territories in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific allows us not only to understand the handicaps and advantages of all of these small island developing States, but also to develop with them cooperative relationships in all sorts of fields, such as early warning and assistance in the event of catastrophes and technical assistance in training, education, health care and environmental management. In each of the three above-mentioned regions France isa member of the regional organizations that bring together the other States neighbouring its overseas departments and territories.

With regard to multilateral financing, which accounts for 25 per cent of our official development assistance, a large part of it is channelled through the European Union's aid programme. It is expected that for the period 1996-2000 more than a billion euros — or roughly the same amount in United States dollars — will be earmarked for the small island developing States in the African, Caribbean and Pacific area. I note that almost one quarter of this amount is to be funded by France, as part of its contribution to the European Development Fund.

Five years after the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action everyone agrees that a great deal remains to be done with respect to the sustainable development of the small island developing States. These States are confronted with major challenges, such as protecting the marine environment against various forms of pollution, the increasing scarcity of fresh water, ever more frequent and devastating natural disasters, adapting to climate change and to the rising sea level, integrating into the global economy, and the diversification of their exports.

France considers that the Barbados Programme of Action can be implemented only if everyone assumes his responsibilities. Island States must elaborate suitable national and regional sustainable development strategies and create domestic poiitical, economic, social, environmental and legal conditions that promote the implementation of these strategies. At the same time, these States must establish their priorities within this overall effort.

On the other hand, the donor countries must reverse the downward trend in development assistance. They must provide the small island developing States with the substantial resources they need to bolster their national capabilities. The donor countries must also improve their coordination with the other donors in order to maximize the impact of their assistance.

For its part, France is determined to reinforce its partnership with the small island developing States so as to provide them with bilateral and multilateral assistance that is both more effective and better geared to their requirements.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Isad Ayad Babaa, representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The convening of this special session to consider the sustainable development of the small island developing States represents the international community's recognition of the special vulnerability of these islands in the age of globalization.

The United Nations has warned the international community that the expected sea-level rise as a result of global warming will turn these small islands into paradises lost. There are more than 34 beautiful small island States scattered across the seas and oceans from the Caribbean to West Africa, from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean, from the Gulf of Arabia to the Mediterranean Sea. All of these now face serious dangers posed by the severe economic and natural circumstances in which they find themselves. [illegible]as close and friendly ties with all these islands. My country, which is suffering from desertification and scarce water resources, fully understands the problems faced by these small islands and wholeheartedly sympathizes with them.

The Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted five years ago at the Barbados Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, gives genuine expression to the special interest of the entire world in these countries, as they are small and marginalized and face enormous obstacles in achieving their sustainable development. Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, recognized the unique character of the small island developing States and their special sustainable development needs.

The General Assembly has called on the Commission on Sustainable Development to review and implement the Barbados Programme of Action with a view to creating and promoting an international environment conducive to the mobilization of the financial resources necessary for supporting the efforts of those States to enhance their development capacities, put a halt to their environmental degradation, improve their economic situation and alleviate their poverty.

We recognize that the small island developing States bear the primary responsibility for their own sustainable development. In this regard, we welcome their efforts to honour their commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action. We also welcome the measures they have taken to achieve self-reliance and to promote cooperation among themselves. Nevertheless, the international community must honour its commitments undertaken in Rio and adopt all measures necessary to support the efforts of these countries in the field of sustainable development through an increased flow of bilateral and multilateral assistance. These islands must enjoy increased access for their exports to world markets; they must be integrated into the world economy; their access to technology must be facilitated; and their freshwater and human resources and tourism industry must be developed. The pollution that threatens their marine and natural resources, as a result of the dumping by some major Powers of their hazardous and toxic wastes into the oceans and high seas, must be eliminated. The small island developing States must be assisted in facing the grave dangers of environmental degradation and natural disasters.

If these islands are to succeed in achieving sustainable development, they will have to enjoy total peace and security. This in turn necessitates the elimination of the causes of tension and conflict in their regions and the eviction of foreign navies and bases that threaten their security, stability and territorial integrity.

In conclusion, my delegation pays tribute to the efforts of the United Nations, its development programmes, the Commission on Sustainable Development and other international organizations to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. My delegation reaffirms its view that this Programme will remain an effective framework in which the small island developing States may achieve sustainable development and economic growth. In his report on this question, the Secretary-General states that if we are able to alleviate the vulnerability of the small island developing States, we will be able to address the larger global problems.

More than ever before, the international community must exert greater efforts to find useful and practical solutions to the development problems of developing countries, foremost among which are those of the small island developing States, and help them to achieve their aspirations to sustainable development and growth. The international community must reaffirm its solidarity with the small island developing States and renew its resolve to establish a new, committed and strong partnership between them and the rest of the world so they can successfully face the challenges of globalization and natural disasters in the new millennium.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hassan Adamu, Minister for Environment of Nigeria.

Mr. Adamu (Nigeria): I convey to Mr. Gurirab the warmest congratulations of the President and the people of Nigeria on his historic election to the presidency of this special session. Our appreciation also goes to the Secretariat for the useful documentation it has provided for this session. At the outset, let me pledge the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

The holding of this special session could not have been more timely, coming as it does at a time of growing concern among the cynics and optimists as to whether or not the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States has failed. It is not by accident that five years ago, in 1994, barely two years after the Rio Earth Summit, the Barbados Programme of Action came out as a specific blueprint for the protection of small island developing States and our fragile environment. As a blueprint, it embodied not only the hopes and aspiration of the citizens of the small island developing States themselves, but also the wishes and goodwill of the international community for a better and sustainable

development of the small island developing States. It is, likewise, no accident that we, in this era of five-year reviews of major world conferences, should now devote this two-day special session to reviewing and appraising the implementation of the Programme today.

For my delegation, the interdependence of humankind and of the nations is an undeniable imperative. Whatever the difficulties or successes, one is bound to have a ripple effect on the other. No single man, woman or country can afford to be an island unto itself, not even the smallest island developing State. This is the basis of our oneness within the United Nations family.

To what extent was this oneness was spelt out in the aims and objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action? How many of these goals have been achieved in the five years of its operationalization? What are the constraints? How much remains to be done? How do we go about it?

These are some of the flashpoints which my delegation believes will add value to our debate in the review and appraisal exercise, and I intend to take up some of them briefly, one by one.

As will be recalled, the Barbados Programme of Action called for national, regional and international action in 14 priority areas, ranging from sectoral concerns, such as fresh water, climate change, biodiversity, marine resources and tourism, to cross-cutting issues, such as human resources development and financing and support needed to put the Programme into action.

The Nigerian Government's commitment to the issue of the environment since Barbados has increased, especially with the creation of the new Ministry of Environment — and I happen to be the first Minister of Environment. Of particular importance is the question of freshwater resources and waste management. These have a severe impact on our countries, especially the small island developing States. They are also crucial questions to ask, since Nigeria currently derives over 90 per cent of its foreign exchange earnings from revenue accruing from oil exploration activities in the coastal environment. This is the basis of Nigeria's commitment to protection from oil spillage and the dumping of toxic and hazardous waste, chemicals and radioactive materials in the coastal areas.

The need for universal commitment to such preventive measures has become more pressing due to the isolation and oceanic location of some small island developing States and their total dependence on a marine and limited terrestrial base, which render them highly vulnerable to contamination from such waste. As will be recalled, Nigeria initiated the Dump-Watch Programme in the West African subregion to monitor illegal dumping of hazardous waste in coastal and territorial waters.

Evidence of action taken towards realization of the goals of Barbados can be further seen in the activities of multilateral institutions, such as the African Development Bank (ADB), in which Nigeria is a major stakeholder. The ADB devoted $701 million over the period 1997-1998 on six African small island developing States. We are also appreciative of funding activities of other agencies, including the European Development Fund, the Global Environment Facility and, of course, the United Nations Development Programme.

My delegation is also aware that the small island developing States, on their part, have made considerable efforts in formulating policies and plans of action to strengthen regulatory frameworks and national institutions for implementing the Barbados Programme of Action. As much as possible, these small island developing States have encouraged domestic investment by the private sector and have attracted foreign investment.

These efforts, however, have not amounted to much progress because of certain basic inhibiting factors. For instance, the Programme of Action has been seriously hampered by inadequate financial support, a factor which could be further traced to incapacitation by heavy external debt obligations, a decline in the flow of official development assistance, poor human resources development and lack of health care facilities.

The small island developing States are also hampered by inadequate institutional capacity for the enforcement of environmental legislation and regulation. Assistance from Governments, international agencies and other bodies has always come too late and has been too little to make the necessary positive impact.

It is also evident that these small island developing States have neither benefited from globalization nor escaped the myriad adverse consequences of marginalization which it has entailed for developing countries. The odds are therefore decidedly against the small island developing States, and they must negotiate effectively for better terms. The net effect is that the level of poverty in small island developing States has been on the increase. The pervasiveness of poverty has undermined the ability of States to provide basic social

services, including education, nutrition, clean water, urban planning and development, thereby undercutting the capacity of the citizens in these States to contribute effectively and positively towards the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

That is not all. The risks from the adverse effects of frequent climate change and the lack of capacity to adapt to these phenomena have exposed the small island developing States to extremely damaging natural disasters, primarily in the form of cyclones, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, landslides and droughts. This has had an adverse impact on the implementation of the Programme of Action in the area of tourism, which is one of the main lifelines of the small island developing countries.

In conclusion, this special session urgently needs to come up with an integrated means of further implementing the Programme of Action in the areas of capacity-building, resource mobilization, finance, transfer of environmentally sound technology, the problem of external debt obligation, poverty eradication and natural disaster reduction measures.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Tu'ataumoepeau Tupou, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Tonga.

Mr. Tu'ataumoepeau Tupou (Tonga): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Kingdom of Tonga. In so doing, may I thank the heads of State and Government, as well as Foreign Ministers, for their warm words of welcome on our admission to the United Nations.

The special session on small island developing States is a timely forum to assess the progress of the Barbados Programme of Action that was formulated five years ago. The Programme was a crucial achievement which envisaged a joint action and partnership between small island nations and the international community in the pursuit of sustainable development. In assessing the progress of the last five years, we acknowledge the contribution of our partners, such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the European Union, Canada and the People's Republic of China, as well as the United Nations specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations, in our sustainable development effort.

We have undertaken steps at the national and regional level to formulate policies and strategies to achieve these goals. These include the implementation of a national environment management strategy, a new fisheries policy, a coastal management plan and environmental legislation. We have exceeded the provisions of the key environmental conventions and are currently implementing the provisions of the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The South Pacific region recognizes that development must be both economical and ecologically sound. At this level, we, together with other member States of the South Pacific Forum, have adopted a framework policy for protecting the environment and promoting the sustainable development of tourism. Other regional initiatives play an important role, and we therefore support the draft resolution of the Caribbean Community to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

The international community must recognize that our development efforts are greatly impeded by factors beyond our control. We are constrained by limitation of land, scarcity of natural resources, fragile environments, small domestic markets and vulnerability to natural disasters. These difficulties have been compounded by the increasingly competitive nature of the global economy, which has adversely affected our economies in trade, investment and capital markets. In this regard, we welcome the recognition by the World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat Task Force of the difficulties faced by our small States. Our region, through the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, has developed an environmental vulnerability index that reflects more accurately the realities of small island developing States. Economic vulnerability ought to be a criterion in considering special deferential treatment of these States.

It is evident that further assistance is needed to advance our goals for sustainable development and the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Consequently, we join other small island nations in calling on the international community for urgent action in the areas of climate change, renewable energy, sustainable tourism development, agriculture and fisheries, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources and resources for the preservation of diversity.

The development of the fisheries sector is of prime importance to us, and we welcome developments such as the ongoing negotiations by the Pacific region with distant water fishing nations and other fishing entities in an effort to establish a real fisheries organization, as envisaged in article 64 of the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

However, it is of concern to us that the donor community has been reluctant to assist the region in other areas of priority, such as surveying the continental shelf. It is one thing to have the potential to lay claim to a continental shelf; but it is altogether different to be able to do so under article 76 of the Convention on the Law of the Sea. In like terms, the region is going to have to be much more proactive in pursuing its seabed mining interests.

Telecommunications and information technology present new opportunities for our small islands. However, the scattered character of our geographical situation renders telecommunications and communication very costly. We recognize the implications of accessible, affordable telecommunications for economic development, and we call on the international community to help us pursue our role in the global knowledge economy by assisting with capacity-building, transfer of appropriate technology and information management, strengthening of our health and education systems and development of new markets.

Finally, it is important that a comprehensive review process now be instituted to monitor the progress and implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. We call for the improved coordination of activities undertaken by United Nations specialized agencies and our respective regional organizations. In this regard, we fully support joint initiatives such as the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET) to assist our stakeholders in the coordination and implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Abdelrahim Ahmed Khalil, representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Khalil (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to express our satisfaction at the holding of this special session of the General Assembly under the wise guidance of the President. I would also like to thank the Secretariat and, in particular, the Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development for his successful preparation of this session.

The fact that this special session is taking place today to review and evaluate the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States confirms the dedication shown by the international community since 1994 in seeing that these countries' needs are met. This would take into account their specific situation and their environmental and development problems, their vulnerability regarding the environment and the efforts they are undertaking in order to achieve sustainable development. They also face specific difficulties compounded by their material and financial situation, as well as difficulties in deriving benefits from the world economic environment and from the globalization and liberalization of international trade.

The international community must recognize that these countries occupy a very important part of the world's oceans and seas and must appreciate their efforts in preserving sea resources. They require that we shoulder our responsibilities to help them preserve their resources, in accordance with the Barbados Programme of Action, as a comprehensive basis for their sustainable development, and in accordance with national and regional strategies.

The international community must also hail the struggle waged by the small island developing States in facing the climate changes taking place. An example of this considerable responsibility is the suffering we all experienced two weeks ago because of hurricane Floyd in this city, which hosts United Nations Headquarters; this highlighted the enormous difference between the power of the hurricane and the capacity for rapid response to its devastating effects.

The delegation of the Sudan shares the hopes of the island countries that the results of this special session will put an end to their vulnerability. We need to take all necessary measures to consolidate the small island States' approach to achieving sustainable development. To do so, we must commit ourselves, including the international financial and trade institutions, to providing the environment necessary to encourage the integration of the economies of the small island developing States into the international economy through the following measures: consolidating an environment favourable to investment and foreign assistance; mobilization and provision of new financial resources; transfer of environmentally sound technology; consolidation of capacities, including teaching, training and the development of institutions and their capacity to compete and to have access to all markets; and diversification of their national economies. Work needs to be done in order to determine degrees of vulnerability, taking into account all the specific environmental situations and economic frailties of these States as indicators that would supplement all the other criteria that can assist in taking decisions regarding preferential treatment for these States.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Ali Hachani, Chairman of the delegation of Tunisia.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): May I say how happy we are that the President is leading this special session of the General Assembly devoted to an evaluation of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We recognize in him an experienced diplomat, and this provides assurances of the success of the work of this session.

On behalf of my delegation, I also wish to convey our congratulations to the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the report submitted to us and on the work accomplished.

Tunisia welcomes the holding of this important session at the threshold of a new century, a time marked by profound international change and at a critical stage in the work for comprehensive development undertaken by our developing countries. This session provides us with a favourable opportunity to undertake an in-depth study and evaluation of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and, furthermore, is an eloquent demonstration of the will and determination of the international community to pursue the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Tunisia reaffirms its solidarity with the small island States and shares their concerns and legitimate aspirations to progress and prosperity.

The international community has a special responsibility with respect to these States. Situated at the heart of the oceans and seas, these countries exercise a special responsibility with respect to the protection of the marine environment and the conservation of important biological diversity.

The small island States face special problems that affect them to varying degrees, relating, in particular, to their land area, to their modest resources, to their ecological vulnerability and to their vulnerability to climate change. Hence the urgent need to implement the Barbados Programme of Action for the sustainable development of these countries.

To the specific problems we have already mentioned, we might add the problems linked to globalization and to the liberalization of trade. Even though it has opened the way to the establishment of more extensive cooperative relations, this double phenomenon has nevertheless had a negative impact on the economies of the small island developing States and has complicated their efforts to integrate into the world economy — particularly in the spheres of trade, investment, commodities and financial markets. This situation has given rise to increasing unemployment, poverty and the marginalization of the weakest sectors of populations.

Tunisia is particularly pleased by the great efforts that have been made by small island States — often in difficult circumstances — to implement the Programme of Action for sustainable development. Tunisia welcomes the determination of the small island developing States to meet new and old challenges in order to attain the goals set by the Programme of Action through the elaboration of new national and regional policies that are aimed, in particular, at better integration into the world economy and better coordination of their strategies in the political, social and environmental spheres in order to better address and reduce the problems they face. Nevertheless, the problems faced by the small island States, like all developing countries, make it impossible for them today to carry out those strategies of sustainable development without the assistance of the international community and, in particular, of the rich countries.

Thus, we believe that the recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development must rapidly be translated into action, in particular, those recommendations that relate to the mobilization of financial resources, the creation of a climate favourable to investment, the transfer of ecologically rational technologies and capacity-strengthening, particularly with respect to education, training, consciousness-raising and institutional strengthening.

The World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development should devote special attention to the need to assist small island States to benefit from globalization and trade liberalization by facilitating access for their export products to world markets, by granting them favourable tariff treatment and by strengthening their negotiating capacities in the multilateral trade system.

The establishment of balanced international cooperation and the achievement of global development require the strengthening of partnership relations between the countries of the North and those of the South on the one hand and, horizontally, between the countries of the South themselves on the other. We believe that South-South cooperation in the area of sustainable development should be consolidated and take more concrete form. In this respect, I reaffirm here Tunisia's readiness to share its experience with all interested parties in every domain, in particular in the areas of environmental protection, tourism and the eradication of poverty, in a framework of partnership, cooperation and solidarity.

In conclusion, may I express my delegation's satisfaction with the efforts made to prepare the documents that are to be adopted by the Assembly at the conclusion of this debate. I hope that their unanimous adoption will enable the small island States to overcome their difficulties.

The Acting President *(spoke in French):* I now call on Mr. Francisco Tudela, Chairman of the delegation of Peru.

Mr. Tudela (Peru) *(spoke in Spanish):* It is a great honour for me to represent Peru at this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, devoted to a review and evaluation of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. This session reflects the renewed effort of the international community to implement international cooperation as a means to achieve development and conservation of the environment in more than 40 countries.

With the guidance and great experience of the President, we believe that these objectives — proposed together by developing and developed countries in Barbados five years ago — will result in new, more important achievements today and in the coming years.

The Barbados Global Conference represented the firm commitment of the small island developing States to promote cooperation on the part of the international community on the basis of agreements reached at the Earth Summit in 1992. Peru recognizes the harmonization promoted by small island developing States to overcome obstacles to their development.

Nonetheless, we wish to emphasize that as environmental and economic conditions for the development of the small island developing States have become more complex, progress in commitments to international assistance has met with difficulties. An immediate and specific response by the international community is seen only when there are regional emergencies or natural catastrophes.

The devastating effects of the El Niño Southern Oscillation dramatically illustrate the vulnerability of most of the small island developing States.

The required sustainable management and training should not be absent from responses to the human needs at the centre of all efforts to achieve full development. It is my delegation's opinion that the basic importance of all joint efforts to achieve the recovery of the environment and its sustainable use for future generations lies in this. Today, we not only reaffirm the Barbados Programme of Action, but we acknowledge that the vulnerability and the threat of an expansion of poverty are worsened by the impact of climatic factors exacerbated by the greenhouse effect.

The existing prevention, mitigation and reconstruction mechanisms will not suffice in the next few years unless we can achieve further progress in gaining a profound understanding of the origin of these phenomena and can learn how to deal with them effectively.

Peru fully acknowledges the contribution that the small island developing States are making in negotiating processes relating to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I would particularly like to emphasize the significant contribution made by the Caribbean States within the Latin America and Caribbean regional consultation mechanisms. The progress achieved in waste disposal management by the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica and Saint Kitts and Nevis, among other countries, has been important and encouraging in the field of environmental management.

I would also like to underline the commitment of the small island developing States to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which all of them have ratified. These indicators prove that the response by the small island developing States has been firm in spite of adverse circumstances during these five years. The Barbados Programme of Action holds valuable potential for an increase in international cooperation and understanding, with great dynamism and full consciousness of the needs of mankind and his environment.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Chairman of the delegation of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me say that it is a pleasure for me to extend to the President and to all members of the Bureau my congratulations on their election.

I would also like to congratulate the Republic of Nauru, the Republic of Kiribati, and the Kingdom of Tonga on their admission to membership in the United Nations.

The twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, with regard to the evaluation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, is of particular importance. The 1994 Barbados Conference and its Declaration represent an important basis for defining the future of development in small island developing States. We are fully aware that the main responsibility for development lies with the States themselves. However, the international community also has a major responsibility towards those States, given the constraints burdening their development — natural disasters due to climate changes, greenhouse gas emissions and the climatic phenomena we have seen recently, including drought, hurricanes and floods. These have led to the destruction of many harvests as well as to other material damage. They have also had serious repercussions on development plans and projects. Moreover, the ever-growing gap between developed and developing countries and the impact of globalization on the economies of developing countries also represent constraints on development in these States.

In order for small island and coastal States to overcome these crises there must be joint and concerted efforts. While it is up to island States to determine their priorities and to prepare and implement well thought-out development plans through their local efforts or with bilateral and international assistance, developed countries also have a special responsibility in terms of developing the resources of small island developing States. Indeed, it has been the policies and industrial activities of developed States that have led to the climate change and global warming that have had the catastrophic effects I have just mentioned. These industrial States therefore have a moral responsibility towards island States. We must therefore find a common understanding and give generous assistance to complete development plans and projects in the small island developing States. Otherwise, the problems will continue, for their own efforts will not be sufficient to ensure the desired development.

Moreover, the major international financial institutions have an important and central role in ensuring the development of small island developing States. These States need greater flexibility from international financial institutions. International crises need to be contained and their impact must be reduced as quickly as possible. In this regard, we cannot forget the role of civil society and public affairs institutions, which could help small island developing States to deal with natural disasters and to implement social development plans.

Qatar, which is aware of the international community's important role in helping small island developing States and other developing countries achieve social development, hopes that the States of the developed world will play their proper role in supporting the economies of developing countries and in reducing the consequences of globalization on our fragile economies. The prevailing phenomenon of globalization has widened the gap between developed and developing countries and has made the economies of developing nations dependent on those of developed countries and has set unfair challenges before our States. We hope this session will ensure the achievement of the goals we have set for ourselves.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Jargalsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, Chairman of the delegation of Mongolia.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): Five years after the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, the United Nations is holding this special session of the General Assembly that is drawing the attention of the world community to the implementation of the Programme of Action — an issue of great importance to the sustainable development of these embattled but courageous countries, as the President characterized them this morning.

During the past five years, States have taken many courageous initiatives and measures to implement the Programme and to promote sustainable development, despite many difficulties and obstacles. Climate change and sea level rise in themselves are far beyond the small islands' control. These islands, by themselves, are limited in size and resources. For them land degradation, loss of forest cover and waste mismanagement are serious causes for concern. They are obliged to import virtually

everything, thereby driving up costs even higher. Like for landlocked countries, freight costs as a percentage of import values for small island developing States are considerably higher than those of coastal and developed countries.

In the light of their limited resources and options, island nations are seeking some kind of compensatory mechanism or assistance while they try to restructure their economies to cope with these problems. For this purpose, small island developing States are actively working with the international community through the Alliance of Small Island States, as well as urging the major industrial countries to curb emissions of greenhouse gases.

Through cooperation among themselves, the island States have gained a measure of political clout that has been most pronounced in the negotiations on climate change. They are now pursuing the use of this cooperation to further their economic strategies.

They have, individually and as a group, carried out a number of projects and programmes to promote sustainable development.

However, despite their efforts, the ability of the small island developing States to fully implement these projects and programmes is limited. The sharp downward trend of official development assistance has become a serious constraint on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. It is therefore imperative for the donor community to mobilize and provide adequate financial resources and technical assistance to enable the small island developing States to promote their sustainable development more effectively.

In this connection, I should like to note that the developing countries, with their specific problems and needs, attach great importance to the upcoming high-level intergovernmental meeting on financing for development.

We all agree that while offering opportunities, globalization and liberalization have negatively affected many developing countries, especially those with specific problems and needs like the small island developing States and landlocked developing countries.

The new round of multilateral trade negotiations under the World Trade Organization could promote the further reduction of trade barriers and provide small island developing States with greater access to export markets for their products. Therefore, the special circumstances of those States, just like those of the landlocked developing countries, need to be addressed at these negotiations.

My delegation also supports the proposal to supplement existing development indicators, for example criteria based on the gross domestic product with vulnerability indexes, taking into account the special problems and needs of the special groups of countries I mentioned earlier.

Like many previous speakers, I should like to underline the importance of displaying in deed the necessary political will on the part of all countries and international organizations, especially the donor community, to cooperate more closely with the countries that face specific problems and needs.

Mongolia supports the draft text on the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, which underlines the importance of closer partnership among the national and local authorities of small island States, non-governmental organizations and private businesses, bilateral and multilateral donors, and regional and international organizations.

May I express my delegation's hope that this special session will provide the international community with the needed blueprint that will enable the Programme to be fully implemented.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Leonardo Santos Simão, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique.

Mr. Simão (Mozambique): On this auspicious occasion of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, I wish, on behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, to express my profound appreciation to Mr. Gurirab and to the Secretary-General for convening this session for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The Barbados Programme of Action, adopted five years ago, is an important initiative presenting multiple ways of solving problems related to the environment and development confronted by small island developing States and deserving, therefore, our common support.

Indeed, the issues of climate change, soil erosion, global warming, sea level rise, coastal and marine resources, natural and environmental disasters, biodiversity resources, waste management and freshwater resources are among those that all developing countries face, in particular small island nations, in an increasingly competitive global economy.

Mozambique, as a least developed country, shares similar problems to those of small island developing States. My country, with about 2,700 kilometres of coastline, where the majority of the population and cities are located, faces serious environmental problems resulting from demographic pressure and economic development activities. Mozambique is equally concerned with the issues of marine pollution, unsustainable fishing practices of other nations, transportation of hazardous and nuclear materials through the exclusive economic zones, which are also the concern of small island developing nations.

We are here today to render our solidarity and support to our sister countries and recognize the efforts that are being exerted by those countries and the small island developing States. The effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action requires the full support of the international community in the spirit of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21.

We strongly believe that by doing so, we will be recognizing the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of small islands to improve their quality of life and increase their prosperity while remaining strongly committed to preserving the environment. As envisaged in the Barbados Programme of Action, developing and developed countries should act together and share the responsibilities and fruits of their partnership.

Small island developing nations represent a particular case as far as environment and development challenges are concerned. Their geographical location and the fact that they share large areas of the oceans make them extremely vulnerable to the unstoppable forces of nature as well as to man-made disasters. We have seen how storms, typhoons, hurricanes and cyclones affect human lives, damaging the infrastructures, economy and social fabric of these countries. The recent tragedy attributed to the El Niño phenomenon that also affected several countries of the Caribbean is a sad reminder of what Mother Nature can do to all of us. While welcoming the prompt emergency assistance provided by the international community to alleviate the suffering of the population affected in small islands, we urge the international community to work harder to reduce the impact of El Niño and natural disasters.

On the other hand, small island developing States are also suffering the adverse impact of the current international economic situation. Indeed, small island nations are bracing themselves against the gathering forces of globalization and trade liberalization, which threaten to alter dramatically their economies and hamper efforts to promote sustainable development.

In this regard, it is imperative that the developed countries ensure the transfer of technology and technical assistance and reverse the downward trend of official development assistance if they really want to help the developing world to attain sustainable development.

A holistic approach to these issues will certainly be required so that developing countries can have an opportunity to achieve sustainable development and the protection of the environment. The entire United Nations system, the donor community and the international community at large are called upon to play a pivotal role in designing the most effective strategies to ensure the future success of the Barbados Programme of Action.

The expectations are high, and the international community bears great responsibility, as envisaged at the Rio Summit and in Agenda 21. Mozambique looks forward to the outcome of this special session and to the deliberations and actions that will follow. After all, the agenda of small island developing States is also the agenda of all of us.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.